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<tr>
<td>BPfA</td>
<td>Beijing Platform for Action</td>
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The Annual Consultation of Commonwealth National Women’s Machineries (NWMs) was held alongside the 59th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York (DATE) under the theme Women’s Political Leadership within Beijing+20 and the Post-2015 Development Agenda: Successes and Challenges from the Commonwealth. The consultation was preceded by two high-level side events convened on Friday 13 March 2015 and the 13th Meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG).

In light of the theme the Commonwealth Secretariat in partnership with the African Union (AU), convened a joint meeting on Friday 13 March 2015 under the theme Africa’s Achievements and Challenges within Beijing+20. The meeting reviewed progress and explored gender priorities for Africa with respect to Beijing+20 and the post-2015 development agenda; identified areas of action on the African Union women’s empowerment and development agenda 2063; and set the road map for the AU and Secretariat partnership for inclusive political development in Africa. In partnership with the Rwanda Ministry for Gender and Family Promotion, the Secretariat convened the high-level side event to share the Commonwealth research on the impact of women’s political leadership on democracy and development in Rwanda, as a commendable model for the Commonwealth. Outcomes of the meeting will feed into the CHOGM Women’s Forum hosted by the Government of Malta in November 2015.

The Secretariat was able to share with NWMs and partners the new framework for the evaluation of the End Term Review of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015 (PoA) comprising the case study development, stakeholder visits and survey interviews presented by the Gender Section and Strategic Planning and Evaluation Division (SPED). The achievements and challenges surrounding the implementation of the PoA, 10WAMM and 2013 CHOGM mandates, and appropriate solutions to support and build on key
work areas and outcomes were also presented. The series of meetings held this year were of specific importance as discussions and planning centered on preparations for the first Women’s Forum in the margins of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).

The 13th meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG) was held on Saturday 14 March, and chaired by Hon Zainab Maina, Minister of Women’s Affairs and Social Development, Nigeria, and Deputy Secretary-General (DSG) Josephine Ojiambo. Members endorsed the evaluation framework for the End Term Review (ETR) report of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PoA). They reviewed and agreed to the proposed ETR report case studies, discussed the role of the Group post-PoA for future ministerial consideration and set the work-plan for the Group until 2016. Guidance was given on how to further strengthen mechanisms to facilitate effective feedback to member countries on their implementation of the PoA and outcomes presented to ministers.

The NWM Consultation held on Sunday 15 March, was chaired by the Commonwealth Secretariat and featured presentations on the 13th CGPMG and Commonwealth updates. Dr Shirin Chaudhury, Speaker in the Bangladesh Parliament delivered the Keynote Address on the successes and challenges of women’s political leadership within the Beijing+20 and post-2015 development agenda. A technical panel highlighted good practices from the Commonwealth on women’s political participation. Speakers were as follows: Rt Hon Rebecca Kadaga, Speaker Uganda Parliament presented on the role of Parliament in advancing gender equality in Uganda; Dr Jeanine Comma presented on the Caribbean region; Ms Roberta Clarke, UN Women Regional Director for the Asia-Pacific Office shared the role of UN Women in the Asia region; and Ms Seema Naidu from the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) based in Fiji, shared positive strategies to advance women’s effective participation in the Pacific. Member countries and partners had the opportunity to share successful practices and strategies to promote women’s participation in leadership positions at all levels of decision-making, aligned with the UN CSW theme on Beijing+20 and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, towards advancing the Commonwealth position and priorities.

Key outcomes from the meeting included strategic partnerships forged with regional and international partners, namely the AU and UN Women. The AU and the Secretariat agreed a road map to support key electoral management bodies and political actors to achieve inclusive politics on the African continent. Discussion was finalised on a memorandum of understanding between UN Women and the Secretariat on critical areas of concerns. The areas covered included women’s political participation, violence against women and girls, gender responsive budgeting and women’s economic empowerment. Ms Lakshmi Puri, Deputy Executive Director UN Women and DSG Ojiambo with Ms Ogunsanya provided technical support.

Ninety-six delegates from 29 countries represented key partners at this year’s meeting of which 22 were senior dignitaries – ministers, ambassadors, permanent representatives and heads of international agencies/organisations. Other delegates were representatives of UN agencies, intergovernmental organisations, civil society organisations (CSOs), professional bodies and Commonwealth associations.
A. African Union and Commonwealth Secretariat: Women’s Political Leadership in Delivering Democracy and Development in Africa

Friday 13 March 2015
As part of on-going efforts to revitalise the Commonwealth’s collaboration with the African Union, the Political Division (Africa Section) in close collaboration with the Gender Section co-organised a high level dialogue with the AU on 13 March 2013. This dialogue was particularly timely and relevant as AU Heads have dedicated 2015 as the year of women’s empowerment. As required under the Secretariat’s Strategic Plan, the event showcased a good example of institutional mainstreaming of gender into the Secretariat’s political work and external mainstreaming with the African Union.

Dr Geraldine Frasier-Moleketi, African Development Bank (AfDB) Special Envoy on Gender chaired the panel session. Dr Aisha Abdullahi, Africa Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Mrs Zainab Hawa Bangura, Under-Secretary-General, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Mr Ahmed Issack Hassan, Chair of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) of Kenya made presentations and Dr Josephine Ojiambo, Deputy Secretary-General (Political) delivered the opening remarks.

The event was well attended by speakers, ministers, ambassadors and senior officials from Commonwealth Africa and non-African countries including the Bahamas and Bangladesh. Critical issues regarding the effective participation of women in politics and leadership at all levels were shared. Delegates also presented their challenges and successes at achieving parity for women’s effective participation in politics and leadership roles. However, women’s equitable participation at all levels remains a key problem for the Continent, as clearly indicated in the Commonwealth election observation reports.

The meeting concluded with the recommendation that numbers matter and that employing affirmative action policies including quotas is necessary to ensure women’s political participation at all levels of decision-making. Of equal importance is the need to support women in politics to deliver on their democracy and development mandates thereby going ‘beyond numbers’. The following outcomes and key actions were observed:
Building the capacity of the next generation of political leaders and those already in power to deliver on expectations

The active participation of young women in politics was acknowledged. Some of the strategies discussed for building the capacity of both young women and those already in political careers were discussed.

- Strengthening leadership skills through intra-party training and capacity-building programmes was considered important. Moreover, training for public speaking and issues-based campaigning would give women an edge to overcome the challenges of campaigning, given that the culture of campaigning in Africa is characterised by personality issues and not ideology.

- Providing opportunities for women already in politics to mentor women aspiring to get in would retain experience and knowledge of women in politics, assure transfer of power, build networks, and empower and prepare young women for future leadership roles.

- The fundamental role of education was emphasised. The Grenada Ambassador to the UN stressed the importance of political education for women and girls. Additionally, the Bahamas Ambassador to the UN shared the importance of networking and exchange tours to UNCSW for young women as a learning experience on regional and international political processes.

- Above all, a critical mass of women in leadership roles across the governance spectrum is required to effect changes, to move agendas and policies at legislation and implementation stages.

The roles and responsibilities of political parties

- Political parties operate within a legal framework and therefore have a responsibility to ensure a gender balance when putting forward candidates for elections dictated by relevant laws. This places a heavy responsibility on the legislature. Another reality noted by delegates is that political parties tend to be quite patriarchal in character when it comes to elective positions. Despite extensive dialogues and workshops held with politicians ahead of the Nigerian elections, urging them to include more women as candidates the Gender Ministry was disappointed to realise women were side-lined during nominations. Civil society representatives from Swaziland underscored the need for political will as an overarching ingredient for change to complement legislative reforms and affirmative action policies.

- Women were urged to take active roles in politics and hold leadership positions in the party structures as a way of ascending into elective positions. The Trinidad and Tobago Special Envoy for Women and Girls underscored that this strategy has enhanced the participation of women in politics in Trinidad and Tobago, where major political parties have had women leaders.

- A major obstacle to women in political parties was limited resources to campaign for example, and to become fledging political players. Political party financing should demonstrate gender accountability. Women in politics were encouraged to link up with women in the private sector to facilitate resources. Since women are the highest number of voters, civil society has a role to sensitise women electorates to insist on gender balance from political parties.
Crosscutting themes

• Governments were urged to support the retention of women leaders in political roles – such as special envoys, mediators, heads of electoral missions to mention a few – to share gender perspectives. The investment made in these women should be skilfully tapped to avoid missed opportunities.

• Women leaders should be given the opportunity to build and nurture a constituency, deepen relationships with their constituents and ensure they deliver on expectations.

• It is critical to link the economic empowerment of women and their participation in politics, and with women voters. The Uganda Speaker of Parliament pointed out that providing communities with the basic amenities such as potable water and electricity goes a long way in empowering women’s economic and political participation.

• The media’s critical role in supporting women in politics was also raised particularly to build capacity and avoid sensationalism.

Conclusion

This dialogue presented solutions to existing and emerging obstacles to women’s full and meaningful participation in politics. It reaffirmed some of the known gender responsive mechanisms and strategies such as quotas, electoral legislation and political party reforms. South Africa adopted voluntary party quotas of 30 per cent and assured women’s participation at all levels. This has been extended to all political parties and other sectors following the gender equality bill of 2014. In Namibia the much-commended Zebra list was limited to one party’s policies and has not been embedded institutionally (2014 COG Report). Likewise in Kenya, the relevant laws required to implement the constitutionally enshrined provisions on gender equality (Article 27 (8) of the Constitution) are yet to be implemented (raised in the 2013 COG Report).

The Commonwealth Secretariat and the African Union committed to support members efforts to institutionalise and embed best practices in practical ways. It was agreed that women’s political leadership would form part of the AU/Secretariat collaboration, especially since the AU 2015 theme is on women’s empowerment. The Africa Section, POL, in collaboration with the Electoral Support Section, plans to implement the gender recommendations of the Commonwealth election observation reports, focussing on some of the gender issues raised in election observation mission reports. By developing thematic programmes, specific activities to advance women’s political participation can be identified in partnership with the Gender Section, AU and other key stakeholders such as electoral management bodies (EMBs) through the Commonwealth Electoral Network (CEN), political parties and legislators. It is instructive to note that POL recently received a request for assistance from the Malawi Electoral Management Body to formulate strategies to improve the number of elected women in national and local assembly elections.
B. Government of Rwanda and Commonwealth Secretariat: Universal Application of Rwanda’s Good Practices on Impact of Women’s Political Leadership

Friday 13 March 2015
Joint Session

The Rwanda side event was convened at the AU Conference Centre in New York on Friday 13 March 2015 and was well attended. Deputy Secretary-General Ojiambo delivered opening remarks at the event via satellite with the Hon Oda Gasinzigwa, the Minister for Gender and Family Promotion of Rwanda, and they were well received by delegates. The high-level side event celebrated the good practices and successful strategies that have advanced the participation of women and impacted positively on development and democracy in Rwanda. Presentations were delivered by the Ms Clothilde Gasarabwe Mbaranga, Under Secretary General in charge of UN Security and Safety; Ms Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, Special Envoy on Gender and Girls African Development Bank; Ms Monique Nsanzabaganwa, Vice Governor National Bank of Rwanda; Ms Rose Rwabuhimi, Chief Gender Monitor; Professor Shirley Randell of Commonwealth Research; Ms Kemi Ogunsanya, Interim Head of Gender Section, and other key dignitaries.

The presentations acknowledged and recognised the following:

- Transformation of the Rwandan society could not have been achieved without the support of gender-sensitive men in the development, enactment and implementation of new laws and sensitisation programmes at all levels of society to change mind-sets on the importance of including women in the transformation and development process;

- Adaptation of a multisectoral approach by women leaders at all levels of decision-making to achieve peace and reconciliation, gender mainstreaming, anti-corruption, state-building, family promotion, community integrity and international development;

- Establishment of complementary institutions and structures to reinforce political will, enforce implementation of gender-sensitive laws, monitor compliance of the 30 per cent quota for women’s representation across all sectors, strengthen budget management systems and promote social development programmes for all citizens.

Looking forward the major challenges highlighted included the sustainability of successes gained, which can be achieved through the support of key stakeholders including political parties. Women leaders were therefore urged to strengthen their capacity for future leadership and create pathways for young women leaders.

Overwhelmingly Rwanda’s achievements serve as a commendable model for the Commonwealth and sharing its good practices is valued for universal application. It is important to recognise the immense roles of women in rebuilding the social, economic and political fabrics of the Rwandan society after the genocide of 1994. This steered President Paul Kagame’s government to put in place legislative and political measures to mainstream women and youth effectively into governance at all levels of decision-making, thus showing the importance of male champions to take forward the gender agenda for women.

President Kagame took advantage of the social assets of women to transform society, rebuild communities and strengthen political and legal structures at all levels. Through reserved seats and the triple ballot electoral system, women gained representation of 48 per cent in parliament and cabinet positions during the 2003 national elections and this increased to 56 per cent after the 2010 national elections. The trend continued in 2014 with an unprecedented 64 per cent of women parliamentarians in the Lower House (and 39% in the Senate).
The Commonwealth Secretariat therefore undertook a research study to evaluate the impact of women’s leadership on democracy and development in Rwanda. The research sought to:

1. Determine whether the increased number of women in leadership has made a significant difference on democracy and development in Rwanda; and

2. Establish the key developmental dividends arising from women’s political participation in Rwanda.

Professor Shirley Randell completed the draft report on the research and the validation of the research was at the request of the Rwanda Ministry for Gender and Family Promotion. Authenticating the research findings and securing local ownership for recommendations and future work were some of the compelling reasons for the June 2014 multisectoral validation exercise held in Kigali.

The Rwanda Minister for Gender and Family Promotion requested that the Secretary-General launch the research report at the CHOGM Women’s Forum in Malta. To achieve this, the Minister wants to review the report to focus more on the impact achieved in line with the post-2015 agenda and strengthen the universal framework on the good practices in Rwanda as an annex to the publication.
Annexes
Annex I

Agenda
13 March 2015
Venue: African Union Conference Centre, New York

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<td>15.00 – 15.20</td>
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| 15.20 – 15.40 | • Arrival of Dignitaries and Delegates  
                  • Registration                                                     |
| 15.40 – 16.00 | Keynote Speakers  
                  • Honourable Oda Gasinzigwa, the Minister of Gender and Family Promotion of Rwanda  
                  • Dr Josephine Ojiambo, Deputy Secretary-General (Political)  
                  Moderator: Ms Gasarabwe Mbaranga, Deputy Under Secretary General in charge of UN Security and Safety |

Panel I: ‘Modelling Rwanda’s experience in women’s leadership and participation – The gender dividend’

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| 16.00 – 16.45 | Moderator: Ms Gasarabwe Mbaranga, Deputy under Secretary General in charge of UN Security and Safety  
                  Panelists  
                  • Ms Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, Special Envoy on Gender, AfDB: African perspective on GE  
                  • Ms Rose Rwabuhihi, Chief Gender Monitor, Rwanda: Women’s political participation  
                  • Monique Nsanzabaganwa, Vice Governor, National Bank of Rwanda: Women’s Economic Empowerment  
                  • Prof Shirley Randell: Commonwealth Secretariat Research  
                  Rapporteur: Ms Donnah Kamashazi, Rwanda |


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| 16.45 – 17.30 | Moderator: Ms Kemi Ogunsanya, Interim Head of Gender Section, Commonwealth Secretariat, London  
                  Panellists  
                  • Ms Emily Boost, Director, Girls specialist team, NIKE Foundation, London  
                  • Ms Donatha Gihana, Interim Director, Girl Hub, Rwanda  
                  Imbuto Foundation Rwanda (TBD)  
                  Rapporteur: Ms Donnah Kamashazi, Rwanda |
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<td>17.30 – 17.50</td>
<td>Implications for the Commonwealth</td>
<td>Framework on universally applicable components for the Commonwealth and globally in line with:</td>
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<td>Global campaign to promote women’s participation in public and private institutions in line with Post-2015 development agenda</td>
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<td>Commonwealth gender priorities, 10WAMM and 2013 CHOGM outcomes</td>
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<td>Discussions:</td>
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<td>Facilitated by Ms Kemi Ogunsanya, Commonwealth Secretariat</td>
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<td>17.50 – 18.00</td>
<td>Closing Remarks</td>
<td>H E Ambassador Gasana, Rwanda Permanent Mission to the United Nations, New York</td>
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Information note on African Union and Commonwealth Secretariat

Beyond numbers: Women’s political leadership in delivering democracy and development in Africa

A dialogue co-hosted by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the African Union

Theme
Women's participation in democracy and development to be aligned with the African Union theme of ‘Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development towards realizing Africa’s Agenda 2063’

Key issues
- How can the African Union and the Commonwealth strengthen women’s political participation, and on which areas should they focus for maximum impact?
- How can the African Union and the Commonwealth ensure members take more action on increasing the numbers and quality of women’s political participation (a key recommendation in many election observation mission reports)?
- What steps can be taken to strengthen the capacity of female politicians to deliver results when they are in office.
- How to create an enabling environment for female politicians when in office.
- How to build a pipeline of young female political leaders.

Objectives
- To identify Africa’s gender priorities as well as new and emerging trends and strategies that can be fed into the CHOGM 2015 Women’s Forum.
- To explore ways of assisting countries to implement the recommendations on gender in election observer reports from both the AU and Commonwealth.
- To mainstream gender in the political work of both institutions.

Venue
African Union Conference Centre, New York

Date and time
Friday 13th March 2015, 09.00–13.00

Target audience
- National Women’s Machineries
- Development partners
- Permanent Representatives in New York
Annex III

Information note on universal application of Rwanda’s good practices

Background
Rwanda has the highest global record of 63.8 per cent of women parliamentarians in the Lower House (and 38.5% in the Upper House). The Commonwealth Secretariat undertook a research study to evaluate the impact of women’s leadership on democracy and development in Rwanda. The research sought to:

i. Determine whether the increased number of women in leadership has made a significant difference on democracy and development in Rwanda; and

ii. Establish the key developmental dividends arising from women’s political participation in Rwanda. Professor Shirley Randell completed the research draft, and the validation of the research was at the request of the Rwanda Ministry for Gender and Family Promotion.

The research findings were validated at a multi-stakeholder validation exercise in Kigali in June 2014, thereby securing local ownership and incorporating recommendations into the final report. Outcomes of the validation included the development of a template to serve as the universal application framework for the Rwanda model, and the strategies identified are amenable to universal application across the Commonwealth. The Ministry strongly supported the proposal to take forward the outcomes of the research and universal application of the Rwandan model across the Commonwealth at a Joint Commonwealth/Rwanda side event at the 2015 CSW in New York and Malta CHOGM Women’s Forum in 2015.

Objective
In March 2015, the Commonwealth Secretariat will share good practices on the impact of women’s political leadership on democracy and development in Rwanda at a side-event in New York in partnership with the Government of Rwanda, as a commendable and universal model for the Commonwealth and globally.

Priority Focus Areas

- Attribution to women’s leadership in Rwanda
  - Peace and reconciliation in Rwanda
  - Poverty alleviation and agricultural campaigns
  - Social and economic recovery and sustainable development
  - Education for girls and related campaigns

- Legal and institutional arrangements
  - Party leadership, parliamentarians, women mayors
  - Anti-corruption campaigns
  - Gender management systems
  - International peace and development

- Compliance and sanction measures
  - Accountability and monitoring mechanisms
  - Emerging priorities and sustainability

Venue

Date and time
Friday 13th March 2015, 1300 – 1700 hrs.

Target audience
- National Women’s Machineries
- Government and Senior Officials
- Development and Strategic Partners
- Permanent Representatives in New York
Annex IV

Concept note

Modeling Rwanda’s Experience in promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment: The Gender Dividend

Introduction

The UN Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2013/18, decided that at its fifty-ninth session, in 2015, the Commission on the Status of Women will undertake a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000). The review will include current challenges that affect implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality while providing opportunities for inclusion of gender perspectives in the post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Rwanda became a member of the Commonwealth on 29th November 2009. This paved the way to a strengthened partnership in several areas including in the implementation of the new Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PoA), which provides the framework for the Commonwealth to contribute to advancing gender equality in the member countries in the decade ahead.

In addition, Rwanda has enjoyed good partnerships with bilateral donors, the multilaterals and the CSOs for the last twenty years. This has played a diverse and important role in propelling the country’s development and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Through this partnership and inclusive economic growth Rwanda is making great strides towards achieving the Beijing Declaration, the twelve critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals. The country has consistently contributed towards the elaboration of Africa’s Agenda 2063 as well as the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Given this background Rwanda in partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat will hold a side event entitled, ‘Modeling Rwanda’s experience in promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment’. The event will showcase Rwanda’s remarkable progress in the 20 years since the genocide against the Tutsis and adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Rwandan context

‘With regards to empowering women and promoting their socio-economic and political participation, we continue to make modest progress. We believe that, besides improving gender relations in our country, this marks healthy progress toward realising our vision of a united, democratic and prosperous Rwanda.’

The 1994 genocide against the Tutsis, which claimed over one million lives, devastated the country leaving a destroyed infrastructure, economy and family fabric. The Rwandan women who attended the Beijing conference represented a society recovering from the effects of genocide and a people with a vision for a prosperous nation where women and men would enjoy full human rights without discrimination as enshrined in CEDAW, the BPfA and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Today, Rwanda has a new story to share with the world, a story of resilience and hope. Inspired by the visionary leadership of H E Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, an all-inclusive Constitution was passed in 2003. The Rwanda Constitution transcended politics based on discrimination and entrenched the rights of women as full partners in nation building. An enabling environment for sustainable development was put in place through Vision 2020, the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS1 and II), which clearly articulate gender equality as a foundational crosscutting pillar. This commitment has enabled the country to set a firm gender-responsive policy and legal

1 H E President Paul Kagame of Rwanda in his address to the 63rd UN General Assembly, September 2008.
framework with a strong institutional framework to support the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Women and children now have legal protection and do not have to suffer in silence any longer. Gender-sensitive laws have been passed and discriminatory provisions revised. These include Law no. 59/2008 on the Prevention and Punishment of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Law no. 27/2001 on the Rights and Protection of Children against Violence. The Land Law, no. 08/2005, guarantees women equal rights with men on access, ownership and utilisation of land, and has increased women’s access and control over productive resources. The 1999 Law on Matrimonial Regimes, Liberalities and Successions is a major breakthrough for women and girls. It created a reversal of the patriarchal marriage system where a woman traditionally entered into a marriage with practically no guarantees to succession or ownership of any property acquired in marriage.

This multipronged approach in social economic development has fast tracked the achievement of almost all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Poverty dropped from 70 per cent in 1995 to 44.9 per cent in 2011 and there is a national target of 23.8 per cent by 2017. Absolute poverty fell from 40 per cent in 2000 to 24 per cent in 2011 with women being a great majority of beneficiaries. Extreme poverty ratios fell by nearly 12 percentage points taking a million people out of poverty and income inequality declined. Rwanda has surpassed the MDGs target of cutting the illiteracy rate by half by 2015 and is among the top three countries globally to achieve universal primary education goals. This is a result of community led initiatives including construction of classrooms in close proximity to communities, school feeding programmes and construction of separate toilet for boys and girls. These initiatives contributed to increased enrolment and retention levels from 95.1 per cent to 98 per cent between 2009 and 2012.

The achievement of MDG 3 on promotion of gender and empowerment of women is visible in different decision-making positions occupied by women. Rwanda leads the world in terms of women’s representation in parliament with 64 per cent. In other areas of decision making women are 32 per cent of senators, 40 per cent of Cabinet members, 40 per cent of provincial governors and 43.2 per cent of district councils.

Rwanda will share the innovations that have led to a successful story in gender equality in a side event to be organised in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat and under the auspices of the Commission on the Status of Women at the UN Headquarters in New York.

Despite Rwanda’s achievements on gender equality and women empowerment, some challenges still exist. The patriarchal thinking in communities affects the implementation of some gender equality laws and policies. For instance we cannot run away from the fact that the capacity of some women to own and claim their rights is still low most especially at the community level, or that unpaid care work remains a challenge for women in Rwanda as it is in the rest of the world. The Government and its partners are committed to collaborate further to address these challenges to achieve gender equality and women empowerment in the post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The side event will have the following objectives:

1. To share Rwanda’s experience in the promotion of gender equality through implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action, 20 years after its adoption.
2. To learn and contribute to the replicable strategies on promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment.
3. To make a call for action to UN member states to ensure that gender equality and women’s empowerment are strategically positioned in the SDGs.

Participation, date and venue

Rwanda’s side event is scheduled for Friday 13th March 2015 at the African Union Conference Hall from 15.00–18.00. The event is open to the public; stakeholders from governments, civil society organisations, academia, private sector and others whose work relates to the Beijing Declaration and 12 Critical Areas of Concern in the Platform for Action are all welcome.

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C. 13th Meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG)

Saturday 14 March 2015
Members of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG) met in New York on 14 March 2015 to endorse the evaluation framework for the End Term Review (ETR) report of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PoA). They reviewed and agreed the proposed ETR report case studies, discussed the role of the group post-PoA for future ministerial consideration and set the work-plan for the group until 2016.

Members discussed and agreed that:

- Any future Commonwealth gender priorities should be aligned to the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and define the Commonwealth’s distinct identity and aspirations on the issues.
- A group should be maintained to be a platform that speaks on gender for the Commonwealth at the global level and holds governments to account for their Commonwealth gender commitments.
- Members must urge their governments to attend the CHOGM Women’s Forum and commit to taking forward its outcomes into the CHOGM and beyond.
- The CGPMG should continue in its current format until the ETR report has been produced and its recommendations reviewed. As the CGPMG itself will be reviewed as part of the ETR the structure of any future group to hold governments accountable to their future gender commitments will be determined in light of its outcomes.
- The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association will present recommendations from the ETR to members of parliament from across the Commonwealth to highlight the Commonwealth’s future gender priorities and the role of parliamentarians in their implementation.
- Members endorsed the ETR framework and committed themselves to working with the evaluation team and to providing more and updated information on the case studies.

Welcome and introduction

CGPMG Chair, Hon Zainab Maina, Minister for Women’s Affairs, Nigeria, chaired the 13th meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group. She welcomed all participants and thanked them for their commitment.
Minister Maina reminded participants that the last meeting of the global CGPMG was held in New York on 15th March 2014 when the chair passed to Nigeria from the Hon Tolofoaivalelei Falemoe Leitatau, Minister of Women, Community and Social Development, Samoa. The chair informed the meeting that the Commonwealth had made much progress in the past year on the implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015 (PoA). She then passed the floor to Ms Josephine Ojiambo, the Commonwealth Secretariat’s Deputy Secretary-General (Political). Ms Ojiambo brought greetings from the Commonwealth Secretary General Mr Kamalesh Sharma and she stressed the importance of the Commonwealth CGPMG meeting. She then outlined the agenda, which aimed to:

1. Endorse the evaluation framework for the End Term Review (ETR) report of the PoA and the linkages with the post-2015 Development Agenda.
2. Review and agree the proposed ETR report case studies.
3. Strengthen the operating modalities of the group at national and sub-regional levels.
4. Discuss the post-2015 role of the CGPMG for future ministerial consideration.

Minister Maina reminded members that the CGPMG was established in 2005 to monitor, evaluate and review the implementation of the PoA, which represents the Commonwealth’s contribution to advancing women’s rights and achieving gender equality in the Commonwealth and globally.

Session I – Global and sub-regional reports

Chair’s report

This session began with a report from the CGPMG Chair, which outlined progress made by the CGPMG since the last meeting in 2014, including:

- Progress was made on the PoA ETR report and case studies, which will be produced during 2015 and 2016. The ETR will assess the current status and trends in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in the Commonwealth. It will highlight the policies, practices and mechanisms that have been successfully used to implement the PoA, and recommend lessons and strategic gender priorities for the Commonwealth moving forward.

- The first Commonwealth Women’s Forum will be held in the wings of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), in Malta, 22–24 November 2015. It will be a critical opportunity for members to ensure that recommendations for enhancing gender equality across the Commonwealth are heard at the highest level.

- The 11th Commonwealth Women’s Affairs Ministers Meeting (11WAMM) to be held in Samoa in September 2016 will debate Commonwealth gender priorities aligned to the upcoming SDGs and develop the accompanying mechanisms to ensure strong, effective monitoring and accountability of all governments in relation to the Commonwealth’s future gender commitments.

- Informal sub-regional CGPMG meetings were held during the year including Southern Africa, in the wings of a meeting of gender ministers of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) in July and East/West Africa held in the wings of the African Regional Conference on Beijing+20 Review in November. This reinforces the fact that regional gender meetings provide great opportunities for members to get together to share experiences and strengthen partnerships to advance gender equality across the Commonwealth.

See Annex III – Chair’s report to the 13th CGPMG for a full summary.

Sub-regional reports

Southern Africa sub-region

Ms Marie-Josee Bonne, Special Adviser to the Gender Ministry in the Government of Seychelles and sub-regional spokesperson, informed the
group that they had held a meeting in July 2014 in the wings of a SADC meeting. She recommended members try to convene meetings in the wings of such forums, noting they are an excellent opportunity for members to come together as a region to hear updates from each other and share and strategise on addressing challenges. She also stressed the importance of using email and Commonwealth Connects when members could not physically come together.

**Europe sub-region**

**United Kingdom**

Mr Charles Ramsden, Head of International Policy, UK Government Equalities Office, reported that members from Europe have met on a number of occasions under the auspices of the European Union (EU), which has identified five priorities for tackling gender equality and he reported the UK’s progress on each as follows:

**Equal economic independence**

He informed members about the Women’s Business Council, which is an independent working group that was set up by the UK Government in 2012 to ensure real action by government, business and others to maximise women’s contribution to economic growth. The members are all business people working in a range of sectors including advertising, recruitment, retail, legal, financial and pharmaceutical. The council made recommendations to the government that it has progressed. These include providing for mothers and fathers to share parental leave whereby women have access to 52 weeks of maternity leave and 39 weeks of pay but the father can now take any unused balance. He announced that the UK Government published the Women and the Economy Action Plan in November 2013, setting out how it would continue to support women’s economic contributions. An example is providing parents with information to help them support their daughters through school and career choices and to challenge gender expectations.

**Equal pay for work of equal value**

He reported that in the UK the gender pay gap has nearly been eliminated for women under the age of 40 doing full-time work and in March 2015 the UK passed a new law that will require companies to analyse and report their gender pay gaps.

**Equality in decision-making**

He informed the group that progress has been made on this in two areas. Firstly the percentage of women on boards in the largest 100 company boards rose from 12 per cent to nearly 25 per cent in the last five years and there are now no all-male boards in this group. Secondly the UK parliament now has its first female Muslim Member of Parliament (MP), first female African MP and the first black woman to represent the Conservative Party.

**Ending gender-based violence**

Mr Ramsden noted that a new national action plan drives this work and reported on one new initiative, Claire’s Law, which allows a woman to seek information from the authorities about whether her new partner has a history of domestic violence.

**Promoting equality externally**

He reported that in the summer of 2014 the UK held two international summits, one focused on ending female genital mutilation and the other on ending child, early and forced marriage. Member countries around the world, including the UK, made a series of pledges to take action on these issues.

**Malta**

Mr Silvan Agius, Policy Co-ordinator at the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties in Malta, informed members that the government is very pleased to be hosting the first ever Women’s Forum to be held in the wings of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting this year. He also reported that the country has made progress in the following areas:

**Equal representation**

He reported that in 2014 the second female President of the country was appointed and there was an increase in the number of females elected as Members of the European Parliament.
Gender-based violence

He highlighted that the Government of Malta supports the need for regional mechanisms to combat gender-based violence. It has ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence and is calling for a greater commitment from the EU on the issue. The government has also criminalised female genital mutilation, forced marriages, forced sterilisation and stalking.

Equality in employment and other spheres of life

He noted that the Government of Malta has introduced free childcare for all working parents and those in full time education. This has led to an increase in the percentage of females in employment by 3.3 per cent in the past year and the country has now exceeded 50 per cent of women in employment.

Sexual orientation and gender identity

He advised the group that the government also works on other forms of discrimination and in 2014 parliament unanimously approved a bill that amends the Constitution to add protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Caribbean/Canada sub-region

Grenada

Hon Delma Thomas, Minister of Social Affairs, reported that the Government of Grenada has approved a National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan with a developmental approach. The government is also focusing action on developing more comprehensive responses to support and protect victims of gender-based violence and holding perpetrators to account. The government has launched the Women’s Initiative for Skills and Empowerment, which provides technical skills training for unemployed and underemployed women. She outlined recent achievements including that the Governor General is currently a woman and that one third of parliamentarians are now women. She noted that the number of female national leaders of organisations and board members is increasing and gender mainstreaming is become more widely used across various sectors.

She also outlined the challenges facing the country, which is currently under a structural adjustment programme that restricts funding for gender equality and women’s empowerment. The Government is seeking support externally to mitigate this situation.

Trinidad and Tobago

His Excellency Mr Charles Eden, Ambassador to the United Nations (UN), reported that over the past decade the country has made significant strides in putting gender equality at the core of its social economic policy. He noted that the country ranks 26 out of 136 in the Global Gender Gap Report of 2013, 27.4 per cent of parliamentary seats are held by women and 59.4 per cent of women have reached the secondary or tertiary education. He also reported that a National Gender and Development Policy, which will guide an effective approach by state and private institutions to promoting gender equity and equality, has been developed and is currently with the cabinet.

The Bahamas

Ms Christine Campbell, First Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Women’s Affairs, Ministry of Social Services and Community Development, informed the group that the country currently has a female in the posts of Governor General, Head of the Central Bank, Director General of Tourism and the Head of the Court of Appeal. She noted that there are several female magistrates and permanent secretaries but the numbers are low in political leadership. To address this the Bureau of Women’s Affairs will be partnering with a tertiary level institution and former senators and parliamentarians to conduct training for women who aspire to decision making. She informed members that the National Gender Based Violence Taskforce was launched in August 2013 and they are in the process of completing a National Strategic Plan and National Action Plan with funding from UN Women. She mentioned the challenge of meeting at the sub-regional level. National Women’s Machineries (NWMs) are all dependent on regional meetings to be able to meet but these are often very short and the costs are high to stay longer to accommodate a CGPMG meeting.
Civil society representative

Ms Hazel Brown, Co-ordinator of the Network of NGOs of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women informed the meeting about a very positive initiative led by the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) Secretariat in collaboration with UN Women, the Caribbean Development Bank and CSOs to create in the Caribbean a post-2015 Gender Action Plan. The group met in Barbados in February 2015 with eight country representatives from the UN as well as representatives from CSOs from six countries. Discussions are ongoing and a major focus of the plan is the strengthening and support for NWMs in the region.

Pacific sub-region

Samoa

The Hon Tololuaivailelei Falemoe Leiataua, Minister for Women, Community and Social Development / Office of the Ombudsman and National Human Rights Institute from Samoa reported as follows:

Women’s political participation and leadership

He informed members that in 2013 the government passed a Constitutional Amendment that guarantees a minimum of 10 per cent of seats in parliament be reserved for women. Additionally a Transformational Leadership Development Programme has been launched and a national strategy on increasing the political participation of women is being developed ahead of the next general elections in 2016.

Community or village level

He noted that in 2003 the government established the positions of Village Women Representatives. There are currently 192 of them who assist with the facilitation, implementation, planning and monitoring of village development programmes. This has facilitated access for low-income families to nutritious food, water and sanitised facilities in both urban and rural villages. A paper is currently with cabinet to consider increasing their salary on the principle of equality and equity of pay.

Public sector

He reported that there are currently 14 women holding Chief Executive Officer positions out of 40 government ministries, corporations and constitutional authorities. This is an increase from 2006 when there were only six. At the Assistant Chief Executive Officer level, women dominate with 84 women compared to 57 men. Under the leadership of the Institute of Directors efforts are being made to attract more women to apply for positions on boards in state owned enterprises.

Gender mainstreaming

He informed members that in 2013, Samoa completed a stock take of the extent of gender mainstreaming processes within government systems. Negotiations are now on going with key regional partners on technical assistance to support the Ministry of Women for the development of a new National Women’s Policy, Gender Statistical Framework and Gender Policy and Implementation Plan.

Gender human rights and law

The Minister reported that in 2014 Samoa signed the UN Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and a four year disability programme in partnership with the Government of Australia has been launched to support the inclusion and active participation of all persons, including women with disabilities. Implementation of the Family Safety Act has resulted in the establishment of a specialist ‘Family Violence Court’. Additionally, a ‘Child Care and Protection Bill’ to provide a protective environment for children, including young women, is in the drafting stage.

Gender poverty eradication and economic empowerment

He informed members that the Samoa Women Shaping Development Gender Programme, which provides support to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), has improved co-ordination amongst national entities and development partners and harmonised delivery focusing on economic development, reducing gender based violence and women’s political participation and decision making. A Family Safety Study is planned to examine the extent of domestic violence and impact of programs in the last 15 years. He noted that the Samoa Youth Employment Programme has also been launched. It will focus on entrepreneurship skills and opportunities for young people (women and men) from the informal sector.
**UN Women Executive Board**

The Minister was very pleased to report that Samoa has been endorsed as one of the Asia Pacific Group members to serve on the board of UN Women, 2016-2018, and is awaiting the outcomes of the elections.

**Asia sub-region**

**Singapore**

The government reported that this year marks the 20th year of the country’s ascension to CEDAW. The UN Human Development Report of 2014 ranked Singapore 15th out of 152 countries in the Gender Inequality Index and 9th out of 187 countries in the Human Development Index. She noted that these indices reflect the opportunities available to women and progress in the areas of employment, empowerment, reproductive health, life expectancy, educational attainment and real income. Singapore was ranked 15th of 178 countries and rated as the best place in Asia to be a mother in the 2014 State of the World’s Mothers Report.

She reported that Singapore is focusing on increasing the number of women on boards and has set up a special committee to encourage shareholders and institutional investors to view gender diversity as an important component for effectiveness. Singapore has a diversity action committee to make sure that women are represented on boards and companies, which companies have to comply with or explain why they have not.

She reported that fathers currently have one week’s paternity leave and working mothers can now share a week of their maternity leave with their working husbands.

**Bangladesh**

The government reported that positive developments have been made across a number of different areas. In terms of women in political leadership currently there are over 70 female parliamentarians of whom 50 are in reserved seats. One minister and two state ministers and also the speaker of the parliament are women. Women are also present in increasing numbers at the senior level in the civil service, judiciary and tertiary education. The Local Government Act has resulted in an increase in women participating in governance at a local and grassroots level. Progress in the field of education is largely due to the provision of free schoolbooks and free school meals enabling more girls to attend school. The government has adopted a multisectoral approach to tackling gender-based violence and are improving sexual and reproductive health services and providing community health services in hospitals. The government stressed the importance of advocacy, partnerships and political will as enablers to improved gender equality.

**Sri Lanka**

The government reported that it is focusing on improving the situation for women in the areas of health, education, women’s access to higher decision-making levels and ending gender-based violence. It was noted that the government has formulated new laws and amended others to preserve gender equality, integrated gender into the government’s plans and established gender units in the line ministries for mainstreaming.

It was noted that violence against women is a priority area and steps have been taken to formulate policy and improve services including the establishment of a toll free helpline, provision of referral services and the establishment of women’s and children’s desks in police stations. Current priorities also include enacting legislation to increase female participation in local government bodies and provincial councils and the establishment of programmes to increase the social and economic status of war widows following the country’s long civil war.

**East/West Africa**

**Nigeria**

Ms Iran Ajufo, Director, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, reported that repeated attempts to hold a formal sub-regional CGPMG meeting had unfortunately failed due to both the Ebola outbreak in the region and a number of countries holding elections. She noted progress in a number of areas. For instance, the Federal Executive Council approved the establishment of gender desks in all government agencies and the development of gender sectoral policies in key
organisations including the police, the electoral commission, the food and drug administration and the Ministry of Education.

She reported that the government has approved a fund of US$100 million for small and medium skills enterprises and there is a presidential directive that 60 per cent of this funding is to be made available to women. The NWM is working with the Central Bank Governor to ensure that the criteria and the modalities for the fund enable women to access it. The government has established a business fund for women in urban areas to enhance their entrepreneurship skills and to enable them to employ other women. She also reported that on the Women’s Fund for Economic Empowerment, which has established co-operatives to assist women to access funding and support.

In terms of political empowerment she reported that the 100 Women Lobby Group has been established to provide an avenue to improve the participation and role of women in politics and governance and the Group will also lobby for legislation without which it will not be possible to have a meaningful impact in increasing the engagement of women and their visibility in decision making positions at all levels.

The Commonwealth Foundation

Ms Diana Atungire, Programme Manager brought greetings from the Commonwealth Foundation’s Director, Mr Vijay Krishnarayan, and colleagues in London. She informed the meeting that the Commonwealth Foundation offers a platform for civil society to come together and contribute to effective governance and to continue to support the participation of civil society organisations (CSOs) in the CGPMG and in other Commonwealth spaces. She reported that the Commonwealth Foundation strongly advocates that this critical partnership with civil society be strengthened to build on current achievements and to agree formal spaces for interaction and joint collaboration going forward.

She highlighted in particular the area in which the SDGs are being agreed as a critical space where the Commonwealth Foundation can continue to ensure that there is a civic voice. She noted that the space offered to civil society through structures such as the CGPMG, particularly at the sub-regional level, are important in ensuring that the Commonwealth collectively benefits from the evidence-based knowledge and the good practices generated through the interaction between government and civil society.

She urged all those present to continue to recognise the added value that civil society organisations play in programme delivery and called for an improved environment for CSO participation coupled with resource allocation to facilitate their work on gender equality. (Please see Annex IV for full reports.)

Discussion and issues agreed

• Members strongly welcomed the reports and noted the many excellent initiatives that they will learn from and consider for their own countries. Specifically they supported free child care as important to help women get into employment; initiatives to end gender-based violence, in particular the importance of working with the police to change their perceptions; ending female genital mutilation; and, women’s economic empowerment.

• Members agreed the importance of NWMs attending the CHOGM Women’s Forum and stressed the value of ensuring that gender is embedded in the agenda of all the other forums (Partners Forum, Youth Forum and the Business Forum).

Session II – Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005 – 2015 – End

Term Review Progress Report

The Chair introduced Mr Yogesh Bhatt, Head of Evaluation in the Strategic Planning and Evaluation Division at the Commonwealth Secretariat to outline the framework of the PoA End Term Review.

End Term Review report

Life cycle

He outlined the five inter-related stages of the PoA as follows:

1. Initiation and conceptualisation - endorsement of the PoA at the Seventh Commonwealth Women’s Affairs Ministers Meeting in Fiji in 2004.
2. Design and planning – the development of plans and strategies for implementation, partnering, knowledge sharing, capacity building, monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

3. Implementation and operationalisation – budget allocation, research, capacity building, advocacy, technical assistance, training, meetings and partnerships.

4. Monitoring – the establishment of the CGPMG in 2005, production of a PoA monitoring and evaluation framework in 2009, the PoA Mid-Term Review in 2010, the establishment of the CGPMG Executive Committee in 2010, the strategic performance review of the CGPMG in 2012 and the establishment of the CGPMG Technical Sub-Group in 2014.

5. Evaluation and learning – reflection on the progress, trends, issues, challenges and global developments in the field of gender mainstreaming and gender equality and identifying strategic priorities as we move forward towards 2015.

Purpose of the ETR

Mr Bhatt outlined the purpose of the ETR process as follows:

- To assess the current status and trends in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in the Commonwealth.
- To identify and map policies, practices and mechanisms that have been successfully used to implement the PoA.
- To identify lessons learned in the implementation of the PoA.
- To recommend strategic priorities and critical areas moving forward post 2015.

Specifically the ETR will:

- Assess the extent to which Commonwealth member countries have advanced gender equality and women's empowerment against the four critical areas of the PoA between 2005 and 2015.
- Review, analyse and conduct a meta-analysis of available data on trends in gender equality and women’s empowerment in the Commonwealth.
- Assess the extent to which the support from the Commonwealth Secretariat (and other partner organisations) has contributed to member states progress in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment.
- Identify good practice examples of PoA implementation by Commonwealth countries and the Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Identify issues, challenges and lessons learned in the implementation of the PoA, both by the member states and the Commonwealth Secretariat, that can be utilised in the design and implementation of future work in the area of gender equality and women’s empowerment.
- Identify priorities and critical areas of action moving forward with clear baselines and realistic targets.

ETR evaluation framework

Mr Bhatt outlined the framework for the ETR evaluation as follows:

- It will use the Gender at Work conceptual framework (see figure 1) that has been adopted by the CGPMG.
- It will present an analysis of trends, policies, practices and mechanisms that bring out a comprehensive picture of Commonwealth countries’ implementation of the PoA.
- It will map significant outcomes drawing upon in-depth case studies.
- It will analyse what worked, what didn’t work and why.
- It will analyse various factors, conditions and processes critical for success.
- It will identify issues, challenges and lessons.
Mr Bhatt outlined the PoA themes, outcomes and indicators that the ETR will use (see figure 2).

He reminded members that for some of these proxy indicators will need to be used.
ETR methodology

Mr Bhatt outlined the methodology as follows:

- The development of an evaluation framework to identify evaluation questions, data requirements and sources
- An extensive review of documents, literature and secondary data
- Stakeholder interviews (face-to-face, telephone and Skype, field visits)
- Electronic surveys (mapping and tracking).
- Case studies
- Theory of change and contribution analysis
- Good practice analysis
- Critical episode analysis

He indicated that visits would be made to at least two to three Commonwealth regions and at least two to three countries from each region.

Phases of the ETR

Mr Bhatt informed members that there would be five stages of the review as follows:

1. Background and inception
2. Survey and data collection
3. Field assessment
4. In-depth interviews
5. Presentation of findings, reports and feedback to the Secretariat, CGPMG and NMWs
6. Finalisation of the report with recommendations and way forward

Deliverables and timeframe

Mr Bhatt outlined the timeframe as in Figure 3.

Role of the CGPMG

Mr Bhatt reiterated that the involvement of the CGPMG would be critical to the entire ETR process, in particular in the following areas:

- Endorsement of the ETR framework
- Identification of and inputs into case studies
- Advice on information gaps
- Inputs during interviews and consultation during country visits
- Comments and feedback on the draft report
- Endorsement of the final ETR report

Discussion and issues agreed

- Members reiterated their commitment to the ETR process and endorsed the ETR framework.

Figure 3. ETR deliverables and timeframe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Activities and Deliverables</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 2015</td>
<td>Request for Tenders for the PoA ETR - Advertised</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2015</td>
<td>ETR Evaluation Team appointed - Contract signed</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 2015</td>
<td>Inception Report - with evaluation framework, work-plan and methodology agreed with the Secretariat</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 2015</td>
<td>Launch of the electronic survey to stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug-Sep 2015</td>
<td>Field visits to selected countries and stakeholder interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2015</td>
<td>Draft ETR Report completed and circulated to NWMs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2016</td>
<td>All feedback received from the NWMs and CGPMG</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 2016</td>
<td>Final ETR Report (with All feedback and comments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2016</td>
<td>ETR Report presented to CGPMG and NWMs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2016</td>
<td>ETR Report endorsed at 11 WAMM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2017</td>
<td>ETR presented to the Heads at CHOGM 2017</td>
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</table>
Members agreed to work with the evaluation team by providing information, being interviewed and assisting in field visits and providing feedback and scrutiny of the draft report.

Members recommended that the evaluation team include expertise in the work and role of civil society on gender equality and women’s empowerment to ensure a full picture is captured.

Members agreed that the role of the CGPMG sub-regional spokespersons would be critical to ensure that information, case studies and expertise are provided from the sub-regions. It was agreed that the evaluation team would be in contact with the spokespersons so they can assist if necessary in encouraging NWM/CSO involvement.

Case study development for the ETR report

Ms Sarah Kitakule, Adviser, Gender and Economic Development at the Commonwealth Secretariat provided an update on the production of the case studies, which will be produced alongside the main report.

She reminded members that while there is a problem with data there are many stories to be shared. The CGPMG is critical in providing these stories to demonstrate to governments the progress made over the last 10 years and to identify the strategies used. She thanked members for their Country Action and Results Submissions and for the country reports provided so far. She informed them that the Commonwealth Secretariat has received over 150 country reports and planned to use around 20 of them to demonstrate best practices and provide lessons learned that members could consider adopting for their countries.

Countries that have provided information are outlined in Figure 4.

The areas covered in the country action and results submissions and country reports are outlined in Figure 5.

Ms Kitakule informed members that a team of consultants from Gender At Work has been commissioned to review all of the material provided and to produce around 20 case studies, which will be sent to the CGPMG Technical Sub-Group for review and endorsement. Members were urged to read the material already available on Commonwealth Connects, which provides a wealth of useful information on successful strategies and actions.

The timeframe for the production of the case studies is outlined in Figure 6.

Figure 4. Country action and results submissions and country reports received

- Australia
- The Bahamas
- Bangladesh
- Barbados
- Botswana
- Cameroon
- Canada
- Caribbean/Canada CSO
- Cyprus
- Ghana
- Grenada
- India
- Kenya
- Kiribati
- Malaysia
- Malta
- Mauritius
- Namibia
- New Zealand
- Nigeria
- Pacific CSO
- Pakistan
- Samoa
- Seychelles
- Singapore
- South Africa
- Southern Africa CSO
- Swaziland
- Tanzania
- Tonga
- Trinidad and Tobago
- Uganda
- United Kingdom
Ms Kitakule advised that the format of the case studies, previously endorsed by the CGPMG, would remain as follows:

1. What was the context?
2. What happened? What were the strategies?
3. What were the impacts at different levels?
4. Tracking change, future plans
5. Conclusion

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**Figure 5. Areas covered by country action and results submissions and country reports**

- Paid parental leave
- Women in global business
- Women peace and security
- Gender Equality Act
- Women’s Health Policy
- Gender balance on government boards
- Women in leadership
- Women’s political participation
- Women’s empowerment
- Gender based violence
- HIV/AIDS
- Economic empowerment of women
- Human trafficking
- Gender responsive social protection
- Gender mainstreaming in practice
- Glass ceiling
- Early and Forced Marriage
- Enterprise development
- Child welfare programme
- Microcredit programme for women
- Women’s legal rights after marriage
- Women’s land rights
- Women’s entrepreneurship
- Women in local government
- Gender equality in the workplace
- Violence against women and girls

**Case study format**

3. What were the impacts at different levels?
4. Tracking change, future plans
5. Conclusion

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**Figure 6. Timeline for production of ETR case studies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Activities and Deliverables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2013</td>
<td>ETR framework endorsed at 10WAMM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2013</td>
<td>Illustrative case study produced and endorsed at 10WAMM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 -</td>
<td>Country Action and Results Submissions, country reports and research produced by NWMs, CSOs and Commonwealth Secretariat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2015</td>
<td>Gender At Work commissioned to produce approximately 20 case studies across all four critical areas of the PoA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2015</td>
<td>CGPMG Technical Sub-Group to review proposed list of case studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May-June 2015</td>
<td>CGPMG Technical Sub-Group to review draft case studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July/August 2015</td>
<td>Case studies produced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Case studies to form part of full ETR report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Challenges for the ETR process

Ms Kitakule then outlined the challenges for the ETR process including:

- The capacity of NWMs to generate and record data;
- The capacity of the Gender Section at the Commonwealth Secretariat to service member countries in data collection, reporting and analysis;
- The operationalisation of the Commonwealth’s gender accountability mechanism - although in 2014 members agreed to the design of a new accountability and feedback mechanism there have been challenges in utilising this because countries have provided reporting by thematic area rather than the whole country and also the lack of capacity and technical skills at both CGPMG and Commonwealth Secretariat level to develop and use the tools.
- Difficulties for members to hold sub-regional CGPMG meetings.
- The lack of resources.

How do we strengthen NWMs for gender results?

Ms Kitakule then led a discussion on how to strengthen NWMs to help them advocate for what they need to improve their effectiveness nationally, sub-regionally and internationally as the Commonwealth voice on gender and to be able to hold governments to account. She proposed the following actions:

- Disaggregated data on status and trends by sex;
- Prioritise and set achievable targets;
- Develop advocacy strategies;
- Use available events and meetings as platforms to advocate for change;
- Strengthen relationships with Equality Commissions, CSOs and other relevant bodies in the private and public sector;
- Find ways to use men as agents for change.

Discussion and issues agreed

- Members welcomed the update and agreed to provide further information for the case studies.
- Members discussed and agreed the proposed actions to strengthen their ability to hold governments to account on gender equality.
- Members reiterated that government accountability for their gender commitments needs to be a focus of the group and that the tools used to monitor and report on future Commonwealth gender priorities must be robust, appropriate and usable and that the capacity of the group needs to be strengthened to be able to use them effectively.
- Members were encouraged to make themselves aware of the strategies and techniques used as part of the UN
Barbershop Conference held in January 2015, which brought together men who were asked to commit to upholding gender equality and changing the negative discourse amongst their peers.

Session III – CGPMG priorities for 2015–2016

Ms Kitakule led the session to discuss the CGPMG priorities for 2015-2016 and the role of the CGPMG post-2015.

Discussion and issues agreed

Future Commonwealth gender priorities

• Members reiterated that any future Commonwealth gender priorities should be aligned to the SDGs, include emerging issues for the Commonwealth not captured in the PoA and define the Commonwealth’s distinct identity and aspirations on the issues.

• Members agreed the Commonwealth should position itself more strategically on gender within the discussions on the SDGs and financing for development, and find its own niche.

• Members agreed that any future Commonwealth gender monitoring and accountability frameworks and tools would need to ensure synergy with global gender reporting to avoid duplication. They would need to be realistic, usable and recognise the skills and capacities of the CGPMG and the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Importance and role of a group

• Members agreed the importance of retaining a group to speak for the Commonwealth on gender at the global level.

• Members emphasised the importance of the group in bringing together both government and civil society, which enriches the Commonwealth’s knowledge and position.

• Members agreed that a group is necessary to hold governments to account for their commitments and it therefore needs to have a more political drive to influence ministerial bodies.

• Members also cautioned that the mandate of a future group would need to be realistic about the technical expertise, capacity and resources that member countries, CSOs, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Foundation could provide.

Building partnerships

• Members agreed on the need to engage more monitoring bodies at a national level, including statistical offices, equality commissions and ministries of finance, because NWMs don’t have the capacity to collect the required data if the group is to monitor effectively.

• Members supported the suggestion to work more closely with the High Commissions in London who can pursue the CGPMG recommendations with capitals directly.

• Members agreed any group would need to be strengthened at the sub-regional level and to deepen partnerships with regional bodies to strengthen regional gender processes and accountability.

• Members welcomed and agreed to take up the opportunity offered by the speaker, Hon Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, to take forward the findings of the ETR and facilitate actions to promote gender sensitive parliaments and to encourage political leadership and representation of women in Commonwealth parliaments.
Commonwealth Secretariat

- Members agreed the Commonwealth Secretariat should be clear on its capacity to analyse gender data provided, present the Commonwealth’s position and build consensus.

Closing and way forward

Dr Josephine Ojiambo summarised the key messages from the meeting including the following:

- Any future Commonwealth gender priorities should be aligned to the SDGs and define the Commonwealth’s distinct identity and aspirations on the issues.

- A group should be maintained to be a platform that speaks for the Commonwealth on gender at the global level and holds governments to account for their Commonwealth gender commitments.

- Members must urge their governments to attend the CHOGM Women’s Forum and commit to taking forward its outcomes into CHOGM itself and beyond.

- The CGPMG should continue in its current format until the ETR report has been produced and its recommendations reviewed. As the CGPMG itself will be reviewed as part of the ETR the structure of any future group to hold governments accountable to their future gender commitments will be determined in light of its outcomes.

- The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association will present recommendations from the ETR to members of parliament from across the Commonwealth to highlight the Commonwealth’s future gender priorities and the role of parliamentarians in their implementation.

- Members endorsed the ETR framework and committed to working with the evaluation team and to providing more and updated information on the case studies.

The Hon Zainab Maina closed the meeting by thanking members for their insights and hard work and for sharing their learnings. She thanked the Commonwealth Secretariat representatives for organising and facilitating this meeting and for their ongoing support for the CGPMG.
Annexes
## Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Item</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09:00 – 10:00</td>
<td>Registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 – 10:15</td>
<td><strong>Welcome and Introductions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hon. Zainab Maina, Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Government of Nigeria</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Objectives of Meeting and Adoption of Agenda</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ms Kemi Ogunsanya, Interim Head of Gender Section, Commonwealth Secretariat</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:15 – 11:15</td>
<td><strong>SESSION I – Global and sub-regional reports</strong></td>
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<td>Global CGPMG Progress Report March 2014–March 2015</td>
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<td>Hon Zainab Maina</td>
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<td>Plenary discussion</td>
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<td><strong>Sub-regional reports</strong></td>
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<td>Sub-regional spokespersons</td>
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<td>Plenary discussion</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Evaluation Framework for the ETR report</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mr Yogesh Bhatt, Head of Evaluation, Strategic Planning and Evaluation Division, Commonwealth Secretariat</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Endorsement of the framework</td>
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<td><strong>Plenary Discussions</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Case study development for the ETR Report</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ms Sarah Kitakule, Adviser, Gender and Economic Development, Commonwealth Secretariat</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Role of the CGPMG Technical Sub-Group</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Plenary discussions</strong></td>
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<td>13:00 – 14:00</td>
<td>Lunch and group photo</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:00 – 15:00</td>
<td><strong>SESSION III – CGPMG priorities for 2015-2016</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Role of the CGPMG post-2015</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• CGPMG priorities for 2015-2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:00 – 15:30</td>
<td>Closing and way forward</td>
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Annex II

Information Note

1 About the CGPMG

The Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG) was established in 2005 to function as a mechanism for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PoA). The PoA highlights four critical areas for Commonwealth action: i) Gender, democracy, peace and conflict; ii) Gender, human rights and law; iii) Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment; iv) Gender and HIV/AIDS.

The CGPMG is currently made up of a rotating core of 26 members, 21 from National Women’s Machineries (NWMs) and five (soon to be expanded to six) civil society organisations (CSOs). Members are usually heads of NWMs and representatives of CSOs from Commonwealth regions (see Annex I).

The CGPMG meets annually in conjunction with the Commonwealth Consultation of NWMs held prior to the Sessions of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) in New York. The last meeting was in New York, 15 March 2014.

Executive Committee

As a means of assisting the Chair in the co-ordination of the group and delivery of its role and responsibilities an Executive Committee was established. It is comprised of:

- Current Chair (Government of Nigeria)
- Immediate past Chair to offer guidance and continuity through past experience (Government of Samoa)
- Head of Gender Section, Commonwealth Secretariat to help facilitate the Chair’s functionality
- CGPMG NWM sub-regional spokespersons
- CGPMG CSO representative

The Executive Committee acts as the voice of the CGPMG on key matters with other stakeholders including the Secretariat’s senior management. It also bridges operational gaps and promotes closer engagement between the Secretariat, the CGPMG and regional partners. The Committee has met twice in London from 30 June–2 July 2012 and 3-4 February 2014.

Sub-regional meetings

In 2011 members agreed to establish sub-regional CGPMG committees and to meet sub-regionally in between global meetings. So far two formal meetings have been held, a Pacific sub-regional meeting held in Fiji, February 2013 and a Southern Africa sub-regional meeting held in Seychelles, January 2014.

Review of the CGPMG

During the 11th CGPMG meeting, held in the wings of the Tenth Commonwealth Women’s Affairs Ministers meeting, members requested a review of the performance, governance and accountability of the group. An external consultant carried out the review during November 2013–January 2014. The findings were endorsed by the CGPMG and NWMs during their meetings in March 2014 where they agreed:

- The remit of the CGPMG would in future focus on accountability and provide an authoritative, collective review on Commonwealth progress on gender equality giving feedback and guidance to member governments using an agreed Commonwealth Gender Accountability Framework.
- The creation of a Technical Sub-Group comprised of senior officials attending the Executive Committee meeting in February 2014, to lead these reviews.

The Technical Sub-Group will be key in providing guidance, in particular via Commonwealth Connects, on the upcoming End Term Review (ETR) process of the PoA, which will be carried out during 2015.
2 Focus of the meeting

Global and sub-regional reports

CGPMG sub-regional spokespersons, or other members if they are not present, will be expected to present member countries’ progress and challenges to PoA implementation since the last CGPMG meeting in March 2014.

End Term Review (ETR) report of the PoA

The PoA ends in 2015 and an ETR report will be produced that will assess the current status and trends in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in the Commonwealth. The report will highlight the policies, practices and mechanisms that have been successfully used to implement the PoA and recommend lessons and strategic priorities moving forward.

The final draft report will be presented to members at the NWM and CGPMG meetings in New York in March 2016. It will comprise the following elements:

- An evaluation report on the four critical areas of the PoA and recommendations on gender equality priorities for the Commonwealth post-2015;
- Case studies demonstrating significant change using the Gender at Work model and template, and incorporating short country action and results submissions.

Proposed framework for the evaluation report

i. An assessment of the extent to which Commonwealth member countries have advanced gender equality and women’s empowerment goals against the four critical areas of the PoA in the period 2005-2015 using the nine quantitative indicators. Proxy indicators will be used where data is unavailable.
   - Gender, democracy, peace and conflict
   - Gender, human rights and law
   - Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment
   - Gender and HIV/AIDS

ii. Presentation of trends in gender equality and women’s empowerment in the Commonwealth 2005-2015 drawing on international, regional and national gender data/analyses and identify cases from which lessons can be learned.

iii. An assessment of the extent to which the support from the Commonwealth Secretariat (and other partner organisations) has contributed to member states’ progress in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment goals in the PoA.

iv. A review and analysis of member states’ country action and results submissions.

v. Identification of issues, challenges and lessons learned in the implementation of the PoA, both by the Secretariat and the member states, which can be utilised in the design and implementation of future work in the area of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

During the meeting the Secretariat will outline the evaluation framework for the ETR report and update members on progress on the selection of the ETR case studies and seek their endorsement. A list of the proposed case studies will be circulated in advance.

Draft CGPMG work plan

The draft CGPMG work plan for July 2015–June 2016 will be presented and discussed alongside the role of the CGPMG post-PoA.

3 Objectives of the meeting

- endorse the evaluation framework for the ETR report and the linkages with the post-2015 Development Agenda.
- Review and agree the proposed ETR report case studies.
- Strengthen operating modalities of the group at a national and sub-regional level.
- Discuss the role of the CGPMG post-2015 for Ministerial consideration.

4 Meeting papers

Hard copies of meeting papers will NOT be available for the meeting but all papers can be found on the CGPMG workspace of Commonwealth Connects. If you are not signed
up to the workspace please contact Kathy Daniel, Gender Programme Officer at the Commonwealth Secretariat on k.daniel@commonwealth.int or +44 20 7747 6468.

### CGPMG Membership Rotation 2014–2016

The membership term begins immediately AFTER each New York meeting. The year is normally from March to March. Length of service is two terms/years except for Canada, which is a permanent member.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Countries in the region</th>
<th>2014-15 from March 2014</th>
<th>2015-16 from March 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Africa/Europe</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E/W Africa</strong></td>
<td>Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda</td>
<td>Ghana, Nigeria</td>
<td>Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>From 2009</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3 seats</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Southern Africa</strong></td>
<td>Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia</td>
<td>Zambia, South Africa, Swaziland</td>
<td>South Africa, Swaziland, Botswana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>From 2009</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3 seats</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Europe</strong></td>
<td>Cyprus, Malta, UK</td>
<td>Cyprus</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1 seat</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Asia</strong></td>
<td>Bangladesh, Brunei, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Brunei, India</td>
<td>Brunei, India, Malaysia, Maldives</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4 seats</strong></td>
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<td><strong>From 2009</strong></td>
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<td><strong>1 seat</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Countries in the region</td>
<td>2014-15 from March 2014</td>
<td>2015-16 from March 2015</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada/Caribbean From 2009 Caribbean 5 seats including Canada, which has a permanent seat</td>
<td>Antigua Bahamas Barbados Belize Dominica Grenada Guyana Jamaica St Kitts and Nevis St Lucia St Vincent and the Grenadines Trinidad and Tobago Canada</td>
<td>Antigua Bahamas Barbados Belize Canada</td>
<td>Barbados Belize Dominica Grenada Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific From 2009 5 seats, including one rotating seat for New Zealand and Australia</td>
<td>Fiji Kiribati Papua New Guinea Samoa Solomon Islands Tonga Tuvalu Vanuatu Australia New Zealand</td>
<td>Vanuatu Kiribati Papua New Guinea Samoa Australia</td>
<td>Papua New Guinea Samoa Solomon Islands Tonga New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Society*</td>
<td>6 seats (one per region) as at March 2014.</td>
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</tbody>
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Chair’s Report to the 12th Meeting of the CGPMG

1 Introduction

The Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG) was established in 2005 to function as a mechanism for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PoA). The 12th CGPMG meeting was held on 15 March 2014 in New York where the Chair passed from the Government of Samoa to the Government of Nigeria.

That meeting focused on assessing the report of the Strategic Review of the Performance, Governance and Accountability of the CGPMG. Members had requested this review at the CGPMG meeting held in the wings of the 10th Commonwealth Women’s Affairs Ministers Meeting (10WAMM) in June 2013 and it was carried out in 2013-2014. Members agreed to shift the remit of the group to be more focused on the accountability of member states to the PoA. They also supported the establishment of a CGPMG Technical Sub-Group and the development of a Commonwealth Gender Accountability Framework for assessing progress on gender equality in member states and mechanisms for providing feedback. This focus and the tools developed will be central to assessing the implementation of the PoA as part of the End Term Review of the PoA, which will be carried out during 2015.

Sub-regional CGPMG meetings were held during the year including in Southern Africa in the wings of a meeting of gender ministers of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) in July, and East and West Africa held in the wings of the African Regional Conference on the Beijing+20 Review in November. This is very welcome news and reinforces the fact that regional gender meetings provide great opportunities for members to get together to share learnings and strengthen partnerships to advance gender equality across the Commonwealth. Both of these meetings reaffirmed the commitment of members to work more closely at a sub-regional level.

2 End term review report of the PoA

As you know the PoA ends in 2015 and an End Term Review (ETR) report will be produced that will assess the current status and trends in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in the Commonwealth. It will highlight the policies, practices and mechanisms that have been successfully used to implement the PoA and recommend lessons and strategic gender priorities for the Commonwealth moving forward. A key part of the ETR will be the production of case studies documenting specific actions undertaken by Commonwealth member countries that have advanced gender equality and women’s empowerment across the four critical areas of the PoA. They will outline what works, what doesn’t work and why in specific contexts in order to change social institutions and discriminatory norms that prevent progress on gender equality. Crucially they will demonstrate actions from which lessons can be learned and that are replicable across the Commonwealth. Members have provided over 50 country action and results submissions from which many of these case studies will be drawn.

During our meeting today the Commonwealth Secretariat will outline both the evaluation framework for the ETR report to be delivered by the Commonwealth Secretariat’s Strategic Planning and Evaluation Division, and provide an update on the selection of the case studies. I expect members to provide comments on this process to ensure that we have a robust and relevant ETR report, which will guide Commonwealth gender priorities in the post-2015 Development Agenda and build the capacity of members to help deliver the Commonwealth’s gender commitments.
3 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting Women’s Forum 2015

As you may recall, during the CGPMG Executive Committee meeting in February 2014 members had the opportunity to meet with the Commonwealth Secretary-General where we reiterated the importance of putting the Commonwealth’s gender commitments higher on the agenda of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGMs). The Secretary-General supported this call and the Government of Malta has agreed to organise an official Women’s Forum to be held alongside the CHOGM in 2015. The Women’s Forum was officially launched on 6 March in Malta. It will focus on leadership and enterprise and we will hear more about it during the NWM meeting. This forum is a very important opportunity for us to ensure that our recommendations for enhancing gender equality across the Commonwealth are heard at the highest level. I urge you therefore to begin to ensure that your government’s preparations for CHOGM include participation at the forum and that your NWM will be well represented.

4 11th Commonwealth Women’s Affairs Ministers Meeting

10WAMM, held in Bangladesh in June 2013, provided an excellent opportunity for members to reflect on progress towards implementing the PoA and to consider Commonwealth priorities for gender equality and inclusivity in the post-2015 Development Agenda. Planning is now underway for 11WAMM in 2016 and we look forward to providing guidance to the Commonwealth Secretariat on the focus and programme for the meeting. The Commonwealth gender priorities aligned to the upcoming Sustainable Development Goals will be debated and crucially the accompanying mechanisms will be developed to ensure strong, effective monitoring and accountability of all governments to the Commonwealth’s future gender commitments.
Annex IV

Report from the Government of Samoa

1  Women’s Political Participation, Leadership and Public Life:

The Government passed a Constitutional Amendment in 2013 that guarantees a minimum of 10 per cent of seats in parliament are reserved for women. To ensure this quota leads to change, a joint national research was conducted on prevailing attitudes and beliefs that contribute to the low participation of women in decision-making at the village level and in parliament. The study recommendations and the application of the Transformational Leadership Development Programme (TLDP) tool⁴ are starting to inform the formulation of a specific national strategy on increasing political participation of women in Samoa as a lead up to the next general elections in 2016. For example, a breakthrough initiative by a women’s civil society group called Samoan Women Rising, supported by the Ministry of Women and UNDP, has recently started to conduct forums, targeting both women and men, to encourage female candidates to contest the general election and to vote for candidates who support gender issues. Additionally, a new Candidate’s Handbook to encourage voting that is also a gender mainstreaming tool is now available as a result of an Electoral Office/UN Women joint workshop.

Leadership at the community or village Level: In 2003 the government established the position of Sui Tamaitai o Nuu (Village Women Representative) within traditional villages, and they continue to play a significant role in the development of Samoa. There are 192 village women representatives who are responsible for mobilising and connecting with the women at the grassroots level through the village women’s committee. The leadership role of the village women representative is very much alive in the heart of each community or village. They assist with the facilitation, implementation, planning and monitoring of village development programmes, in particular water and sanitation, beautification and disaster risk reduction and management. For some of you who were fortunate to travel to Samoa to participate in the UN Small Island Developing States Forum in September 2014, village women representatives and their women’s committees led the village welcoming preparations throughout the entire conference period. The work of the village women representatives has facilitated positive changes to low-income families by improving access to nutritious foods, water and sanitised facilities in both urban and rural villages. At the moment, a policy advice paper to Cabinet is pending regarding a salary increase to VWRs based on the principle of equality and equity of pay.

In terms of women in leadership positions in the public sector: Samoan women are using their educational achievements to gain leadership and management roles, as evidenced in the government ministries and corporations. In the public sector there are currently 14 women among 40 chief executive officers in Government ministries, corporations and constitutional authorities. This is an increase from 2006 when there were only six. At the assistant chief executive officer level (senior level), women dominate at 84 in total compared to 57 males. Under the leadership of the Institute of Directors, for the first time ever efforts are being made to attract more women to apply for membership of boards of directors in state-owned enterprises, starting with an awareness-raising workshop as part of the 16 days of activism campaign to end violence against women last year.

Strengthening gender mainstreaming across Government processes and systems to enhance Government accountability mechanisms towards gender equality has been revisited: In 2013, Samoa completed a stock take of the extent of gender mainstreaming processes within the government systems. As a result of the stock take, negotiations have commenced with key regional partners on technical assistance for the development of a new National Women’s Policy, Gender Statistical Framework and Gender Policy and Implementation Plan to support the Ministry of Women.

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⁴ TLDP is a tool to facilitate attitudinal and behavioural change to address gender issues.
2 Gender human rights and law

Last year in September Samoa signed the Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). A four-year disability programme has been launched in partnership with the Government of Australia to support the inclusion and active participation of all persons, including women, with disabilities. Implementing partners under this programme include the National Council of Persons with Disabilities with four outcome areas: Outcome 1 - Government of Samoa policy and programmes increasingly compliant with the CRPD; Outcome 2 - Deeper community awareness of and support for the rights of disabled women, men, boys and girls and their increased social inclusion; Outcome 3 - Increased accessibility of services (mainstream and disability-specific); Outcome 4 - Increased participation by women and men with disability in livelihoods and employment.

Implementation of the Family Safety Act has resulted in the establishment of a specialist Family Violence Court. Additionally, a Child Care and Protection Bill to provide a protective environment for children and young women, is in the drafting stage.

For the first time, the Ministry of Women in partnership with the Samoa National Human Rights Institute initiated a National Human Rights Award. The Award was used as an avenue to draw more attention to national efforts in recognition and realisation of ‘human rights’ and to end violence against women. This was part of a series of activities during the 16 days of activism.

In addition, the Samoa Law Reform Commission is undertaking a CEDAW Legislative Compliance Review of all existing laws in Samoa with public consultations to be held this year.

3 Gender poverty eradication and economic empowerment

Under the Australian Pacific Women Initiative, the Samoa Women Shaping Development Gender Programme to support MDGs and CEDAW compliance has resulted in improved co-ordination amongst national entities and development partners and better harmonised delivery overall. The programme deliverables will focus on improving economic development, reducing gender-based violence, improving women’s political participation and decision-making. The programme will support the continuation of livelihood programmes for women within the informal sector based on the ‘economic empowerment principle’. Added to this will be a major undertaking towards the conduct of a Family Safety Study that will look at the extent of domestic violence and impact of programmes in the last 15 years.

A recent development in terms of young women’s economic empowerment is the formulation of a Samoa Youth Employment Programme, which will focus more on entrepreneurship skills and opportunities for young people from the informal sector. In relation to young women’s contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation a Young Samoan leader, Miss Brianna Fruean, has made history with her milestone achievement as the youngest ever winner of a Commonwealth Youth Award. At just 16, Brianna – who won for the Pacific region – was one of four winners chosen from across the 53 Commonwealth countries, and recognised on 10th March 2015 in London for Excellence in Development Work. Brianna founded an environmental NGO, Small Voices, when she was 11. She advocates for climate change awareness through projects and programmes that have helped Government’s climate change mitigation efforts, such as tree-planting projects and establishing inter-school networks to highlight environmental issues. Miss Fruean is also the leader of Future Rush, an environmental group that mobilises youth to run sustainable development projects in their communities.

In terms of education, the School fee scheme introduced in 2010 to help Government meet the MDG target for free education at primary level, has now been extended to include secondary schools. This will support the retention, enrolment and completion of secondary schooling for girls and boys as well as teenage mothers.

Lastly, Samoa has been endorsed as one of the Asia Pacific Group members to serve on the UN Women Executive Board from next year to 2018. If elected, this will indeed be an honour and the very least Samoa can do to progress an agenda so close and dear to its heart.

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Annex V

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D. Annual Consultation of Commonwealth National Women’s Machineries

Sunday 15 March 2015
Overview

The theme of the 2015 Annual Consultation of Commonwealth National Women’s Machineries (NWMs) focused on ‘Women’s Political Leadership within Beijing+20 and post-2015 Development Agenda’. As the world commemorates 20 years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in New York, it is noteworthy to highlight the contribution of the Commonwealth, which called for 30 per cent representation of women across all sectors in the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PoA).

The NWM meeting included a business segment and capacity strengthening for members. The business meeting presented outcomes on the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG), the End Term Review (ETR) processes of the PoA, an update on the implementation of the PoA and presentation on the first Women’s Forum in the margins of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Malta.

Following the business meeting the substantive aspect of the meeting focused on good practices from the Commonwealth in advancing the participation of women in Cabinets, public service, parliaments, local and community governance and the challenges ahead as we usher in the post-2015 global development goals. The outcome of the meeting will feed into the on going women in leadership research and events planned to identify good practices, strategies and mechanisms for strengthening inclusive participation at the CHOGM Women’s Forum in Malta.

The keynote address and panel presentations emphasized the importance of strengthening women’s effective leadership, eliminating barriers and promoting mechanisms for their equitable representation at all levels of decision-making. Panelists were from the regions of the Commonwealth and alluded to the positive impact of women’s leadership on democracy and development in many Commonwealth countries.

Present at this year’s meeting were a number of ministers, high commissioners, senior officials, permanent secretaries, UN Women representatives, development partners, Commonwealth associations, and corporate and civil society leaders from Commonwealth member countries.
Morning Session

1. Welcome and introduction

The 2015 Annual Consultation of National Women’s Machineries (NWMs) was held on Sunday 15th March 2015. As International Women’s Day fell on Sunday 8th March, the meeting was moved to the first weekend of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW), to allow members to celebrate International Women’s Day in their own countries. The theme of the 2015 Annual Consultation of NWMs was Women’s Political Leadership within Beijing+20 and the post-2015 Development Agenda: Successes and Challenges from the Commonwealth. The focus of women’s leadership and democracy stems from the three-year work plan for the implementation of the 10th Women’s Affairs Ministerial Meeting (10WAMM) outcomes in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The meeting was chaired by Dr Mrs Josephine Ojiambo, the new Deputy Secretary-General (Political) and ably supported by Ms Kemi Ogunsanya, Interim Head of the Gender Section. Dr Ojiambo welcomed members, the Chair and Regional Spokespersons of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG), dignitaries, senior officials and observers from Commonwealth Associations and inter-governmental organisations to the meeting. The meeting served as a good opportunity for members to network, share lessons learned and identify good practices that could be adapted to each country’s situational contexts.

Dignitaries included: Honourable Dr Shirin Chaudhury, the first woman Speaker in her country, Bangladesh, and the first woman Chair of the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association; Right Honourable Rebecca Kadaga, the first woman speaker of Parliament in Uganda; Ms Roberta Clarke, the Regional Director of UN Women, Asia-Pacific office in Bangkok; Dr Jeannine Comma, Board Member Commonwealth Association of Public Administrations and Management and CEO and Director of Cave Hill School of Business, University of West Indies, Barbados; and Ms Seema Naidu with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in Fiji. Moreover, the Fiji representative was particularly welcomed, it being Fiji’s first attendance following its return to the Commonwealth family.

Theme 59th Session UN Commission on the Status of Women

The 59th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women centred on the 20 years celebration of the landmark Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995. The Chair and Regional Spokespersons of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group were urged to highlight the Commonwealth position in their Commonwealth statements. Further, conclusions reached from the consultations should be reflected in respective countries and regional statements to the UNCSW. The theme of 2015 NWM meeting was anchored on the positive achievements of women’s political participation within the Beijing Declaration.

Commonwealth Connects

The Commonwealth strives to increase the use of information technology as a networking tool through Commonwealth Connects, a pan-Commonwealth gateway to information and resources and a platform supporting collaborative networks. For the first time, hard copies of meeting papers were not provided during the meetings. Members were only given the provisional agenda and paper detailing how to register with Commonwealth Connects. All the presentations and related documents for the meeting are available on Commonwealth Connects and registration is required for access to the secure meeting spaces. All documents can be downloaded from the National Women’s Machineries and Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group workspaces on Commonwealth Connects. A number of members had registered and other members were urged to register with the network. Colleagues on hand to provide required assistance to sign up were Ms Chantal Cummings and Ms Kathy Daniel.
1. Report 11th Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group Meeting

The 13th global meeting of the CGPMG was held on Saturday 14 March 2015. The Chair of the Group, Honourable Zainab Maina, Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development in Nigeria, delivered the report at the NWM meeting. The Commonwealth Ministers of Women Affairs established the CGPMG in 2005 to function as a mechanism for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the implementation of the PoA. The 13th CGPMG meeting was held on 14 March 2015 in New York and following are the key outcomes of the deliberations.

Sub-regional CGPMG meetings

Sub-regional CGPMG meetings were committed for the Southern Africa, Europe, East and West Africa regions. However due to unforeseen circumstances planned meetings could not be held on account of the outbreak of Ebola in the West Africa region and elections in some member countries. Small island states of the Caribbean and Pacific regions could not meet due to geographical distance between states. Most regions raised financial constraints as a challenge to organising sub-regional meetings. Members reinforced that sub-regional meetings provide great opportunities for them to network, learn and share good practices. Indeed, progress has been achieved from sub-regional group reports sharing successes on the implementation of the PoA. Areas of focus and issues discussed at the meeting included economic independence, equal pay, women on Boards, gender-based violence, gender supportive legislation (constitutional reform, parliamentary participation), gender mainstreaming, women’s interpretation, women in decision-making at all levels, access to finance and shared parenting. Future Commonwealth gender priorities should resonate with the sustainable development goals while maintaining the Commonwealth identity and niche in the global discourse. The importance of strengthening the partnership between governments and civil society is crucial for achieving gender results, and is a unique feature of the Group.

End of Term Review report of the PoA

The PoA ends in 2015 and a robust and relevant ETR report will be produced to guide Commonwealth gender priorities in the post-2015 development agenda. Members endorsed the revised evaluation framework for the ETR report and case study production process and agreed to:

1. Provide inputs to the terms of reference for the ETR consultancy to ensure it reflects the needs for both governments and civil society organisations, and to advertise it widely.
2. Support the evaluation team including by being interviewed and supplying data.
3. Continue to provide case study materials to the Commonwealth Secretariat.
4. Continue as an essential body for the duration of the ETR process; future mechanisms to monitor the PoA and strengthen accountability of governments and critical stakeholders will be guided by the recommendations from the ETR report. Clarity on the Group’s purpose, rule and mandate will draw on lessons and experience of the past 10 years to ensure that it effectively complements other gender bodies to the Commonwealth’s advantage and needs perspectives through innovation and strategy approaches.
5. Strengthen communication with High Commissioners to help raise Commonwealth gender priorities with the respective governments.
6. Accept the offer for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Executive Committee Chair to facilitate the presentation of the ETR report to parliaments across the Commonwealth.

Lastly, members agreed that the guideline for the reporting and accountability template developed by the Commonwealth Secretariat would be reviewed as part of the ETR process.

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting Women’s Forum 2015

Members stressed the importance of placing Commonwealth gender commitments high on the agenda of CHOGM and with the support of the Secretary General an official Women’s Forum will be convened alongside CHOGM in November 2015. The Women’s Forum was officially launched on 6 March in Malta and members agreed that resources should be made available by appropriate authorities to ensure government’s preparation for CHOGM to include required representation of National Women’s Machineries and civil society at the Forum.

11th Commonwealth Women Affairs Ministers Meeting

Planning is underway for the 11th Women’s Affairs Ministerial Meeting in September 2016 in Samoa, and the CGPMG will convene in the margins of the ministerial meeting to endorse the final ETR report and new plan of action. Discussions will include the role of CGPMG and any future mechanisms to ensure strong effective monitoring and accountability of all governments to the Commonwealth’s future gender commitments.

2. Update Commonwealth Secretariat work programmes

The Secretariat thematic programmes are in direct response to the PoA, 2013-2017 Secretariat strategic plan, institutional gender equality policy and ministerial recommendations. The recommendations were made at the 10th Women’s Affairs Ministerial Meeting and the 2013 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting mandates on women’s leadership and gender equality. They highlighted the need to focus on women’s leadership and identify strategies for increasing women’s representation and influence in leadership positions with a view to strengthening effective policy making, as well as future Commonwealth gender priorities aligned to the post-2015 sustainable development goals.

The Gender Section implements its work through advocacy, partnerships, capacity building, technical assistance, research and knowledge creation. For a long time mainstreaming was focused with member states. Internal gender mainstreaming has formed a major part of our work focusing on strengthening the capacity of Secretariat staff endorsed by the Board of Governors as a mandate that every process, system, policy, programme and project must be mainstreamed. Landmarks include the relocation of the Gender Section to the office of the Secretary General, leveraging access with various divisions. Gender elements have been incorporated into the Secretariat’s project documents and as such 67 per cent of projects and programmes have integrated gender. Partnership and sharing of resources with divisions has improved on gender related projects such as women’s political leadership, violence against women and girls, and women’s economic empowerment. Gender training assessment was conducted with senior staff and a gender-based baseline survey completed with staff for the first time in the Secretariat. The outcome of the survey led to the development of gender awareness sessions and specialised training on gender analysis for staff. Further, gender statements have been integrated into recruitment, procurement, expert rosters, the new Secretariat Handbook, and speeches of the Secretariat, to mention a few examples.

Our thematic work on gender and political development focuses on strengthening women’s leadership at all levels of decision-making through a number of approaches inclusive of advocacy, capacity building and knowledge creation. The programme is aimed at transforming systemic cultural and political structures to advance women’s full and effective participation in politics and governance, hence the theme for the meeting. The Secretariat partnered with the African Union and the Government of Rwanda. With the African Union it convened side-events in New York to strengthen women’s political participation and leadership at decision-making levels aligned to the AU’s 2015 theme and ambitious 2063 agenda. The Secretariat joined with the Government of Rwanda to showcase the good practices in Rwanda and
positive impact of women’s political leadership on democracy and development in the country as a commendable model for the Commonwealth. The successful strategies and mechanisms used to advance women’s political participation were recommended to increase the representation of women in public and private/corporate boards based on a niche baseline research developed by the Secretariat.

The gender and social development programme has contributed to the global debate on women’s rights and the law, CEDAW, HIV and AIDS, indigenous women’s rights and women’s land rights. The programme now focuses on one key area, the jurisprudence of equality on violence against women and girls. It is aimed at strengthening women’s access to justice and the effective delivery of justice for women and girls affected by sexual violence. A judicial forum was held in Botswana in April 2013 and resulted in the development of the first ever judicial resource manual for the eastern Southern African countries. A variety of manuals are available for prosecutors and police but none for the Judiciary. Similar manuals will be developed for other Commonwealth regions, to be followed by validation and popularisation of the manual at the regional and national levels.

The Secretariat convened the Asia regional consultations with key stakeholders to end impunity for violence against women in partnership with the UN Women Regional Office for the Asia and Pacific region and the Canadian Government. To effectively address violence against women and girls the approach should involve relevant stakeholders. Hence, the consultations expanded participation beyond Judges to include prosecutors, investigators, police and ombudsman and national human rights institutions. The consultations reached consensus to develop the Asia judicial resource manual and bench-books, and convene a judicial forum for the Pacific region.

The gender and economic development topics for focus are gender and trade, access to finance, gender responsive budgeting, women on Boards and corporate leadership. Research on financial inclusion and women’s assets to finance was produced based on the case study on Indian banks and financial services. The aim was to determine appropriate policies for women’s financial inclusion and in this way promote gender responsive investments in financial institutions, including central banks. Gender responsive budgeting guidelines were produced for mainstreaming gender budgets within ministries, and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago was supported with successful achievement. The programme further promotes savings and credit schemes organisations through research, knowledge sharing and technical capacity. The promotion of women’s assets to trade and procurement is a key role of the programme. Research has shown that the percentage of women in procurement is almost zero, even at all international and global institutions. The programme plans to convene a Commonwealth trade fair in St Kitts and Nevis later in the year as a follow-up to the 2012 Birmingham Trade Fair.

Lastly, the Gender Section is working closely with the Government of Malta to host the first CHOGM Women’s Forum in November 2015, and with the Government of Samoa to convene the 11th Women’s Affairs Ministerial Meeting in Apia in September 2016, as well as lead on the end term review of the Plan of Action.

Comments from members

The Government of the Bahamas was interested in the judicial resource manual for the Caribbean region and recognised that violence against women and girls takes various forms linked to geographic locations across countries and regions. The Government of the Bahamas requests that a similar resource manual is produced for the Caribbean region and popularised in member countries. Further, through technical expertise from the Secretariat, the Bureau of Women’s Affairs in the Bahamas has partnered with former parliamentarians, senators and a tertiary level institution to provide training for women leaders aspiring to politics to take part in the 2017 national and parliamentary elections.

The Government of Namibia shared the important increase in the representation of women for the first time in parliament and national government following the 2014 elections. Involving male champions is critical to realise change for the benefit of women and men in society.
The **Government of Pakistan** requests to be part of the validation of the Asia resource manual in partnership with UN Women. Pakistan was well represented at the Asia regional consultations held in Bangkok in November 2014.

The **Government of Uganda** called for more research on women in the Judiciary. D S G Ojiambo also recommended women’s leadership in diplomacy should be considered especially when they leave office to serve as key leaders for mediation and as special envoys for the good offices of the Secretary-General.

The **Government of Lesotho** called for mainstreaming strategies to raise awareness for the media and artists perpetuating cyclical sexual impunity or abuse of women, which objectify women unfairly.

The **Government of Grenada** recommended that gender mainstreaming should be complemented with better quality of life and better services, and to assess the impact of women’s leadership and outcomes derived from gender mainstreaming to demonstrate the positive changes made to society.

The **Government of Fiji** called for a budget and practicality for synergising reporting on the PoA, CEDAW, UNSCRs and the SDGs.

The **Government of South Africa** adopted the employment equity legislation based on its political history to ensure gender equality. The Employment Equity Commission monitors the implementation and compliance to legislation and is led by a woman. Research has been extended to include women participating in business both privately and publicly and continues to empower women to be part of that mainstream.

The **Government of Solomon Islands** emphasised the importance of role models for children and young people, while the Government of Fiji Islands recommended a specific goal for children in the PoA.

**UN Women** assured its full support for the Secretariat’s gender mainstreaming efforts in terms of the training programmes to advance personal and professional capacity of staff. UN Women recently produced guidance notes on gender mainstreaming and put in place a system wide action plan on gender equality and empowerment in 62 agencies and entities of the United Nations, with annual reporting for accountability. These successes, inclusive of monitoring and evaluation, can be swapped with the Commonwealth Secretariat.

**Civil society** representations highlighted that women and children are more vulnerable to climate change. Evaluations further revealed there is an absolute lack of women’s participation in disaster risk reduction strategies in some local and community panels, and organisations and companies responsible for conservation strategies. It is critical to prepare women to carry out drills to protect their families and communities, and hold decision-making positions in community bodies. Moreover, it is critical to integrate a gender perspective into disaster risk reduction and allocation of resources for disaster relief particularly to countries affected by climate change in the Pacific and Caribbean regions. Climate change is one of the mandates of 10WAMM and will feature high on the agenda of 11WAMM in Samoa, and the Gender Section is gradually integrating gender into the climate change work of the Secretariat.

The women in leadership research included a baseline study of 33 countries focusing on women’s leadership in state owned enterprises and corporate boards, in cabinets and among permanent secretaries, directors, deputy directors and heads of departments in the public service. A key area of concern is the representation of women in political party structures. Advocacy strategies are necessary to achieve gender parity and reach consensus on party, legal and electoral reforms.

### 3. End Term Review of the PoA

Dr Ojiambo acknowledged the importance of the PoA, which represents the commitment to advancing women’s rights and achieving gender equality in the Commonwealth and globally. The meeting reported on the End Term Review of the Plan of Action 2005–2015 starting with the development of case studies and followed by a comprehensive review including good practices, successful strategies and challenges on women’s political leadership in cabinets, parliaments, public service and local governance. The Secretariat presented its work programme and an update on the ETR framework for the PoA and received comments from members.
Mr Yogesh Bhatt, Head of Evaluation at the Secretariat, presented an overview of the modalities required for the evaluation framework for the ETR, which was endorsed at the 13th CGPMG meeting. It is important to situate the entire ETR within the life cycle of the PoA starting from its initiation and conceptualisation and subsequent adoption in Fiji at the 7th Women’s Affairs Ministers Meeting, as the Commonwealth’s contribution to the Beijing Platform for Action. The PoA provided the overarching framework, and critical areas of action for Commonwealth member countries and the Commonwealth Secretariat. The PoA was developed in stages from the planning and design phase, followed by implementation plans where partnership strategies were established, information and knowledge sharing mechanisms initiated, capacity building plans made, and a monitoring, evaluation and reporting strategy put in place. The last phase was the operationalisation phase, which included work plans, budget locations, knowledge creation, research, capacity building, advocacy, trainings, conferences, ministerial and high-level meetings, as well as technical assistance through the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation.

Strategic partnerships were forged with regional and international organisations including UN Women, the World Bank and African Union as well as ministries of government, academic and research institutions, corporate sector entities and civil society organisations. Simultaneously, the PoA was monitored under the supervision of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG). The CGPMG was set up in 2005 to monitor the implementation of the PoA. The group meets every year prior to the National Women’s Machineries meeting in New York. The Secretariat provides updates on the progress of the PoA annually and at the triennial Women’s Affairs Ministers Meeting, and member countries regularly submit reports at these meetings.

A mid-term review of the Plan of Action was undertaken in 2010 and the Executive Committee of the CGPMG was established in the same year. A strategic performance review of the CGPMG was undertaken in 2012, and a baseline for the PoA was established, taking 2004 as the baseline year. The review is an opportune time for reflection, evaluation and learning, and to identify common trends, progress achieved and challenges that remain for the effective implementation of the PoA.

The ETR of the PoA is integral to realising the aims of the Commonwealth on gender equality, women’s empowerment and mainstreaming as enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter, the Plan of Action and the Secretariat’s institutional gender equality policy. The ETR should be relevant and aligned to the current global development agenda and emerging trends on gender mainstreaming and gender equality. The ETR will be very focused, and will:

- Assess the current status and trends in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in the Commonwealth;
- Identify and map policies, practices and mechanisms that have been successfully used to implement the Plan of Action;
- Identify lessons learned in the implementation of the Plan of Action; and,
- Recommend strategic priorities and critical areas for action post-2015, taking into account the Commonwealth Charter, the mandates from the Heads of the Governments, Women’s Ministerial Meetings and the Commonwealth Secretariat strategic plan.

Key deliverables and timelines for the ETR are ambitious and highlighted as follows:

f. In April 2015 the tender for the Plan of Action will be finalised and advertised for six to eight weeks. Request all members present to circulate widely to encourage institutions and capable individuals to apply and present proposals.

g. By end of May/early June the tender should be completed and an evaluation team appointed to undertake the assignment.

h. By the end of June an inception report with the evaluation framework, work plan and methodology agreed by the Secretariat is established.

i. In July a brief and focused electronic survey to all the stakeholders will be launched and disseminated widely to identify best
practices, issues and challenges, and recommendations for planning and policy development.

j. By August/September field visits to selected countries and stakeholder interviews would be completed. At least three Commonwealth regions and two to three countries in each region will be visited for the review.

k. By November the draft End Term Report will be circulated to members.

l. By end of January 2016 the Secretariat should have received feedback from member countries.

m. By February 2016 comments and recommendations from members and the Secretariat are incorporated to finalise the End Term Report.

n. By March 2016 evaluators will present the outcomes of the ETR at the CGPMG National Women’s Machineries Meeting for endorsement.

o. By September 2016 recommendations proposed in the ETR will be developed by the Secretariat and presented at the 11th Women’s Affairs Ministers Meeting in Samoa as a new plan of action on Commonwealth gender priorities in accordance with the post-2015 development agenda.


Presentation on case study development of the ETR

The case study report to the ETR will showcase successful stories of countries implementing the four thematic areas of the PoA. Over 150 submissions were received from 32 Commonwealth countries. The areas covered are diverse – leadership, health, equality, empowerment, gender-based violence, HIV, women in local governance and entrepreneurship. Through an advertised tender process, a consultant has been appointed to review all 150 case studies and shortlist 20 case studies that will be published as part of the ETR report. The case studies will be developed according to the Gender at Work framework, focusing on the context, strategies used, impact at different levels, methods to track change, future plans and conclusions. The studies will serve as a learning and development tool for the Secretariat and member countries to identify gender results, prioritise and set targets, develop collective advocacy strategies to actualise change, maintain momentum with key partners and hold governments accountable.

Comments on ETR process

The presentations on the ETR process are available on Commonwealth Connects.

UN Women recently launched a commemoration initiative, Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step it up for gender equality. This can be achieved if we all work collectively to ensure women get better represented and are empowered. Very few women have made it within the higher bracket of leadership, with more women in the lower bracket of work. Many women in the rural areas have limited opportunities for empowerment that could lead to meaningful changes. As we move forward on the evaluation it is important to include the lower bracket of women so that the evaluation is not restricted to a few but embraces all women in leadership across all sectors at all levels of decision-making.

The Government of South Africa recommended that the End Term Review of the PoA should be highly consultative with engagements with National Women’s Machineries, partner organisations, civil society and key stakeholders supporting Commonwealth countries to achieve the targets set by the Plan of Action.

The Government of Nigeria recommended that the ETR review process should strengthen partnerships, build synergies in driving increased commitment to gender equality at the political level and recognise the voice of the Commonwealth within the global discourse. Concrete results, allocation of resources, policy reform and development can be realised by engaging at the highest levels of decision-making in partnership with inter-governmental agencies. Holding the Women’s Forum is a good example of such engagement to raise these important issues.
4. **Presentation CHOGM Women's Forum by Government of Malta**

This year is particularly significant for the Commonwealth as it will be the first time a Women’s Forum will be convened in the margins of CHOGM, and hosted by the Government of Malta. The Forum will be similar to the youth, partners and business fora, and will ensure the issues of women and girls remain high on the agenda of Heads of Government. It is anticipated that the strategic policy proposals from the Women’s Forum will be taken forward as part of the CHOGM mandates and will impact on the lives of the 1.2 billion women who are Commonwealth citizens. Ms Phyllis Muscat, Chair of the CHOGM Taskforce and Ms Claire Cassar, Chair of the CHOGM Women’s Forum Sub-committee delivered a vibrant presentation aimed at engaging members’ participation in the forum.

The chosen theme for Malta CHOGM 2015 is ‘Commonwealth adding global value’. The Heads of Government Meeting will be held from 27 to 29 November and the retreat will be held on 28 November. A number of cultural events will be convened in the run up to CHOGM to celebrate the theme, such as the Malta Fashion Week and Jazz Festival. Traditional to CHOGM, four forums will be convened from 20 to 26 November. The dates for these forums overlap to enable participants and delegates to engage and participate widely.

1. **The Youth Forum** will be organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat Youth Affairs Division and the Commonwealth Youth Council in collaboration with the Maltese Youth Forum Sub-Committee, the Parliamentary Secretariat for research and innovation, youth and sport, and the National Youth Council. The forum will focus on youth entrepreneurship and employment, gender issues, youth policy and youth work, sustainability and environment, education and youth participation. The venue for the forum is already secured at the San Antonio Hotel and Spa in St Pauls Bay in the north of Malta.

2. **The People’s Forum** will take place between 22 and 26 November. Key partners are the Commonwealth Foundation, Taskforce Women’s Forum Sub-Committee, Commonwealth Associations, Malta Confederation of Women’s Organisations, National Council of Women and the Department of Gender Studies, University of Malta. The Gender Section was represented at the launch of the Forum on 6 March in Malta. A website for the CHOGM events is live with social media pages for announcements, registration, accreditation and relevant information on the forums. Importantly, the Women’s Forum will serve as the platform for grassroots civil society organisations and leaders to ensure all the voices of women are heard and all the issues debated. Key themes include women’s leadership and entrepreneurship, women’s health and education, women in the media, Civil Liberties and local NGOs. The Forum will focus on human rights and humanitarian issues and the secured venue is the Corinthia Hotel in St Georges Bay.

3. **The Business Forum**, which is the largest forum with attendance of over 2000 delegates, will be held between 24 and 26 November. Key partners are the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council with the local taskforce sub-committee. This forum will focus on a Commonwealth Vision for Sustainable Growth, Financial Services for Growth, Technology for Growth, Infrastructure, Common Health and Tourism for Growth. The secured venue is the Hilton Hotel.

4. **The much anticipated Women’s Forum** is Women Ahead: Be All that You Can Be. It will be held between 22 and 24 November at the Inter-Continental Hotel. Key partners are the Commonwealth Gender Section, Taskforce Women’s Forum Sub-Committee, Commonwealth Associations, Malta Confederation of Women’s Organisations, National Council of Women and the Department of Gender Studies, University of Malta. The Gender Section was represented at the launch of the Forum on 6 March in Malta. A website for the CHOGM events is live with social media pages for announcements, registration, accreditation and relevant information on the forums. Importantly, the Women’s Forum will serve as the platform for grassroots civil society organisations and leaders to ensure all the voices of women are heard and all the issues debated. Key themes include women’s leadership and entrepreneurship, women’s health and education, women in the media.
and women’s technology and innovation. While addressing these issues, the forum will highlight the equality plight of the 1.1 billion women in Commonwealth member states, and members should influence the outcomes of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in which gender equality needs to be a mainstream topic of concern. Additionally, hosting the Women’s Forum is historic for Malta since Heads of Government adopted the PoA in Malta in 2005. We therefore aim for an ambitious yet concrete and focused follow-up agenda as a key outcome of the forum.

Comments from members

The **OECD** representative acknowledged the recognition of grassroots issues at the Women’s Forum.

The **Government of Singapore** shared the case study of the Chairman of the Singapore Stock Exchange who challenged the status quo of big capital companies without women represented on their boards and encouraged the imposition of a quota to create space for women on boards.

It is anticipated that concrete actions will be endorsed by Heads of Government and taken forward to future CHOGMs. The agenda and list of speakers will be finalised in collaboration with the Gender Section, Commonwealth associations and key partners.

5. Statements from key partners

**UN Women**

UN Women values the partnership with Commonwealth Secretariat as an important example of a trans-regional group that brings together countries at different levels of development with universal values, agenda and equality for women’s empowerment and women’s rights. UN Women seeks to build synergies and mobilise resources with Commonwealth countries to achieve the highest (ambitious) common denominator for gender equality and women’s empowerment in the context of democracy and economic development.

The political declaration of the CSW to achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment for all women and girls is linked to the post-2015 development agenda and Goal 5 within the SDGs, which voices participation and leadership of women in both private and public sectors. UN Women appreciates the Commonwealth Secretariat for selecting the theme of women’s political leadership within Beijing+20 and post-2015 development agenda. This is one of the most important areas of concern from the Beijing Platform for Action, which is often politically contested and culturally challenged. It is also one of the most stubborn in terms of the structural barriers women face to reach positions of power and decision-making in all sectors and at all levels.

In this historic moment, UN Women is in the midst of one of the most profoundly transformative moments in terms of international norm setting in the area of sustainable development, peace and security, financing for development, humanitarian action and disaster relief, risk reduction and resilience building, climate change action, urban settlement, setting the new urban agenda and Habitat 3. All these processes are integrally related to the Secretariat’s work with gender machineries. The Beijing Platform for Action addressed the underlying issue of gender inequality and discrimination. Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that accurately reflects the composition of society needed to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning.
The strategic objectives are taking measures to ensure women’s equal access and full participation in power structures and decision-making, and increasing women’s capacity. Governments tend to prioritise ending violence against women, engendering law enforcement, economic empowerment and other issues. It is critical to transform institutional structures and discriminatory social norms and practices, and to provide more domestic resource mobilisation to favour women in decision-making and leadership as a critical part of the new plan of action, to strengthen laws, policies and measures for effective implementation. Some countries have reformed electoral laws and constitutions to achieve parity in parliaments and political parties. Such measures should be extended to all levels – the Executive, state assemblies and city, village and local councils.

Today women’s leadership, participation, influence and decision-making have increased significantly worldwide, and the international community recognises that humanity will not reach its full potential if half of its resources remain underutilised. Today gender equality in decision-making is recognised as critical for sustainable, people centred development, just societies and democratic governance.

Women comprise only 5 per cent of CEOs of Fortune 500 companies and boards of directors and between 9 per cent and 15 per cent of the judiciary, a very sad reflection even in the developed countries. We celebrate each new woman head of state or government but at the current rate it will take 80 years for gender parity to be reached in the workplace and 30 years to have gender parity in the parliaments. UN Women have launched a campaign along with member states that calls for 50-50 women’s participation by 2030. We cannot wait another century for this entrenched imbalance in gender inequality and discrimination to end. This can be achieved by the concerted efforts of key stakeholders as champions for change including men and boys, religious and cultural leaders, policy makers, academicians, business community, non-governmental and community based organisations.

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) serves 22 Pacific island countries and territories through technical assistance, policy advice, training and research. The SPC works in a range of sectors including health, agriculture, marine, biodiversity, climate change, energy, transport and social developments with the aim of achieving three development outcomes namely sustainable economic developments, sustainable natural resource management and development and sustainable social developments.

SPC’s strategic objectives include the enhancement of effective service delivery to member countries and territories, creation of strategic alliances and effective partnerships and engagements at national, regional and international level. To this end our engagement in this meeting and equally the annual Commission on the Status of Women seeks to strengthen existing SPC partnerships with member countries and/or create new partnerships with regional and international organisations. The purpose is to enhance support provided to member countries in the context of SPC mandates to include gender mainstreaming, human rights and the empowerment of women and girls.

In preparation for the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 the Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and the Advancement of Women and Girls was developed and endorsed by member countries and territories to inform their contribution and engagement at the Beijing conference. The framework monitors the Pacific region’s work on gender equality through the triennial Conference of Pacific Women. SPC continues to facilitate and co-ordinate the compilation of progress achieved in education, health and legal and policy frameworks, and challenges that remain in addressing the increasing prevalence of violence, the non-communicable disease pandemic affecting our women, enhanced recognition of women’s contribution to the economy and the low numbers of women holding leadership positions in the political sphere. All these issues are interlinked, for instance we cannot promote women’s leadership and women’s economic empowerment without addressing violence against women and women’s health concerns.
As a partner to the Commonwealth Secretariat, SPC plans to collectively support member countries and territories with technical and financial resources to improve the quality of life for women and girls in the Commonwealth. Towards this end SPC will also strengthen collaboration with regional partners such as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, UN Women, UNFPA and civil society organisations for the post-2015 development agenda.

Commonwealth Foundation

Ms Diana Atungire acknowledged the presence of civil society organisations (CSOs) and the importance of them remaining resolute in their commitment to advocate for full and equal participation of women and girls with disabilities, in the formal and informal sectors, rural and urban areas, and among the marginalised in society.

GenderNet, OECD

OECD acknowledged the importance of resourcing for gender equality, and co-ordinates the development of a distance committee network on gender equality that brings together the gender advisors from donor countries. In recent months OECD negotiated with key donors and adopted in September adequate resourcing for gender equality underpinned to the new global commitments that will feature at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa in July 2015. This is a huge opportunity to shape a financing package that can deliver on long established and newly won commitments on gender equality. Commonwealth countries have an essential role to play in reaching consensus in Addis by bridging differences and forging commonality across different negotiating groups. OECD plans to continue the conversation with the Secretariat on adequate financing for gender equality and women’s rights.

Commonwealth Business Women’s Network:

The Commonwealth Business Women’s Network focuses on encouraging, enabling and embedding women’s economic empowerment through the three Ts of trade, talent and training. Programme activities are impactful, measurable and scalable, such as the Commonwealth Business Women’s Academy, focusing on the critical areas women have identified across the Commonwealth. The network comprises 12 regional partners across Commonwealth member states with a combined membership of 56,000 businesswomen in urban and rural locations from Lesotho to Pakistan. They share a common need for support in transitioning their enterprises from small to medium and medium to large. Future partnership with UN Development Business plans to link contracts with multilateral developments banks and public procurement for women entrepreneurs. Further, the initiation of multilateral trade missions composed of women entrepreneurs from Commonwealth regions demonstrates a commitment to deliver trade missions of women entrepreneurs to member states over the next 10 years. The network will host the annual Commonwealth Women in Business Awards before CHOGM 2015 and the winners of some of the categories will be announced during the CHOGM Women’s Forum in November 2015.
Session Two: Panel Women’s Political Participation within Beijing+20 and Post-2015 Development Agenda

Regional presentations on women’s political participation focussed on women’s political participation and good practices from the Commonwealth. The session was chaired by D S G Ojiambo and supported by Ms Kemi Ogunsanya, Interim Head of the Gender Section. The Honourable Dr Shirin Chaudhury, first woman Chair of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Executive Committee in over 100 years and Speaker in the Bangladesh Parliament delivered the keynote address. Right Honourable Rebecca Kadaga, Speaker of the Ugandan Parliament, delivered opening remarks.

The Commonwealth currently has four women heads of state and government (in Bangladesh, Jamaica, Malta and Trinidad and Tobago) and several Governors General representing Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. Only 16 countries have attained the targeted 30 per cent for female political representation in upper and lower houses of parliaments with Rwanda ranking the highest with 64 per cent followed by Seychelles with 43 per cent and South Africa with 42 per cent. A third of Commonwealth members have attained over 20 per cent of women in parliaments and local governance.

Following constitutional amendments to reserve one third of all local government seats for women in India over one million women were elected into India’s Panchayati raj. Similarly, in Bangladesh institutional reforms to increase women’s active participation in Bangladesh resulted in 600,000 women elected in Bangladesh Union Parishad (referred to as UP). However more effort is required for Commonwealth member countries to attain the minimum 30 per cent of global target by 2015.

It is within this context that the panel presentations and country submissions are intended to provide the annual consultation with good practice models and key information on women’s political leadership in cabinets, parliaments, public service and local governance to enable discussions and facilitate lesson sharing.

1. Keynote Address by Hon Shirin Chaudhury

Hon Shirin Chaudhury provided an overview on ‘Women’s Political Leadership within Beijing+20 and priorities for the Post-2015 Development Agenda’. It is important to remember the journey of Beijing+20 from 1995, now formulating the post-2015 development agenda and the significant implications for women’s political leadership. Bangladesh has sterling examples. The Prime Minister, leader of the opposition and deputy leader are all women with strong political will to achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment. Bangladesh deployed the first all-women police peacekeeping force to missions in Congo and Haiti. Similarly, the Bangladesh Parliament have standing committees for health, women and children, social welfare, maternal mortality, infant mortality, prevention of early...
Commonwealth National Women’s Machineries Meeting

marriage, prevention of violence against women and reproductive rights issues. Bangladesh achieved some of the MDGs (reduce maternal mortality and infant mortality, achieve gender parity in education) and enacted gender sensitive policies and legislation for the benefit of society.

Women’s political empowerment has gained currency over the years, engaging the discourse at various levels to emphasise the importance of women’s political empowerment. The political empowerment of women is integral to women’s economic, social and legal empowerment. Indeed, women can play an effective role in decision-making processes, priority setting of agendas, and creating space to ventilate fundamental concerns of families, children and to a greater extent the society.

Looking forward, this is a defining moment to set the agenda for women’s political leadership for the next 20 years, the post-2015 era. Equality and representation are at the heart of democracy so every political agenda must include the perspectives and views of all those who are likely to be affected by such an agenda. The basic reality is that women are often excluded and their perspectives and views are often not reflected in decision-making. Equality therefore entails allowing women and men in the decision-making processes within the democratic framework, and it is particularly important for women to make space for themselves if necessary.

At the international level, equal participation of women and men is one of the core values and cornerstones of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979. Similarly, the Beijing conference in 1995 passed a major milestone in the women’s movement in emphasising the need for women’s participation at all levels. The Beijing Platform for Action identified the inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making process as an acute factor and insufficient mechanisms available at all levels to promote women’s advancement.

Since 1995, women’s representation in parliament has increased from 11.3 per cent to 16 per cent in 2005 to 21 per cent in 2015, which shows a positive trend amongst all of the scenarios. However, women around the globe at all socio-political levels are under-represented and far removed from the decision making process, more so within parliaments. The political, economic, social, cultural and public environments are generally discouraging, unfriendly and hostile for women.

Women encounter political, economic, social and cultural barriers that discourage and prevent their political participation. The political structure and electoral systems, particularly first past the post, limits the representation of women. Proportional representation, resulting in three to four times more women elected, has been considered as a better alternative. This electoral system has successively eroded the obstacles of the political structures in contrast to other electoral systems.

The prevalence of masculine models – dominating the political arena, formulating rules for political gains and priority setting – are not useful or congenial for increased women’s representation. Lack of political party support is a major issue with the ground rules and nomination of candidates for elections decided by political parties. Women are largely absent in decision-making processes within political party structures, which is a major barrier where the parliamentary board nominate candidates for the elections and many women do not have a voice.

The nomination process within parties is biased against women. Male characters tend to dominate the election process and deprive women of sufficient financial support for their electoral campaigns. Social and economic obstacles that discourage women include negative perceptions on the capability of women to lead and deliver, inadequate financial resources, triple-shift responsibilities and few opportunities to nurture a constituency. Cultural obstacles including stereotypes and predetermined social roles also diminish the self-confidence of women.

A number of scenarios can be drawn as recommendations for change, namely:

- Changing the electoral system by weighing the consequences of different systems, an effective legislative framework, and compulsory induction of women within political parties either by nomination or legislation with a minimum requirement of 30 per cent or 33 per cent as a broad based consensus, institutionalised within the electoral laws as a provision for every political party.
Creating access to funding by the political parties by establishing a common fund to support women’s political campaigns.

Introducing quota systems, reserve seats and affirmative discrimination to reduce the systematic exclusion of women may cause many controversies. If there was an equal level playing field for women, a quota system is not required. A critical mass of women is required to create an equal level playing field.

In conclusion, to promote the underlying principle of Beijing+20, a renewed pledge of commitments to achieve the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making is needed to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning. Progress has been achieved on the political front, and it has been an arduous and difficult journey. Perseverance, institutional reforms, political will, commitment of political parties and international recognition for the need to ensure equality as well as continued and sustained mobilisation have resulted in bringing about the desired change to a great extent. It is important to take advantage of every opportunity to be part of the change to millions of women around the world.

2. Opening Remarks by Right Honourable Rebecca Kadaga

In 1995 when governments, civil society and other stakeholders gathered in Beijing, one group conspicuously absent was the parliamentarians. At the outcome of the declaration no specific instructions were given to the parliaments but several parliaments took up the responsibility of monitoring, oversight and budget control as part of their duties.

In Uganda between 1994 and 1995 the country debated and propagated a new constitution, which enabled the inclusion of key principles of CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action. Article 8 of the Uganda Constitution addresses the ‘Inequality of Women and Men and the Sharing of Power’. The completion of parliament provides for the various categories of members of parliament both in the Constitution and the Parliamentary Election Act, which provides that women members would be elected. The representation of special interest groups by affirmative action was to be reviewed after the first 10 years and then every five years until it became no longer necessary for positive action.

In this way, the provisions of the Parliamentary Election Act and the Local Government Act have enabled a steady increase of women within parliament rising from 14 per cent in 1989 to today at 34 per cent in 2014, and 40 per cent representation of women in local governments. However, Uganda is yet to reach parity or even the threshold of 30 per cent within the Cabinet although there are a few key ministries led by women including Energy, Education, Trade, Industry and Tourism.

The Uganda Parliament has successfully addressed the burden of poverty, equal access to education and training, health care and other services, effects of farm conflicts on women, inequality between women and men and economic structures. Mechanisms have been instituted at all levels for the advancement of women and promotion and protection of women’s human rights, as well as to end stereotyping of women, unequal access to communication systems and gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and the safeguarding of the environment.

The Uganda Parliament has achieved these feats through government sponsored or private members bills such as the Human Rights Commission Act, Domestic Violence Act and Equal Opportunities Commission, since 2007. A major challenge is to educate the population and law enforcement officers about the laws. Meanwhile, every police station has a family desk where women, children and men can report domestic issues.

A significant feature of the Uganda Parliament is the women’s caucus, which sponsored and pushed through the private members bill on prevention of trafficking of persons in 2010. The women’s caucus, with the support of some male colleagues, has also promoted a number of bills on immunisation, tobacco control, minimum wage, patience, stress and responsibilities as private members bills, pushed by private back benchers who have reviewed the penal code to further define categories of discrimination.
Parliament also amended the Employment Act, among others, to provide paternity and maternity leave. The women’s caucus is a strong advocate for enacting a new law on the people’s defence forces, particularly the provisions for women who joined the army as a career but are not allowed to marry or have children within a prescribed time. This was an arduous battle with government but the provisions were eventually removed.

Parliament established several secretarial committees chaired and represented by women parliamentarians, namely the Human Rights Committee, Equal Opportunities Committee, Committee on Health and Education, Committee on Social Services and Committee on Gender, Labour and Social Development. In addition, there are several forums on children, food security, climate change, water, sanitation and hygiene amongst other topics.

The most influential body in parliament has been the Uganda Women’s Parliamentary Association (UWOPA). Its mandate is to engender legislation and raise awareness on women’s rights and gender issues, as well as lobbying, advocacy, networking and social mobilisation. UWOPA is a cross-party caucus and the Chair is a member of the opposition but she gets full support from the institution.

After every general election UWOPA designs a five-year action plan on the issues determined for change during the parliament’s tenure. If not achieved in that tenure the issues are carried over to the next parliament. For example, the Association’s strategic plan for 2011-2016 aims to achieve policies on gender responsive budgeting, rights of domestic workers, reproductive and maternal health, and (in collaboration with the Foundation of Health) to increase salaries for health workers and provide more health facilities.

Through UWOPA the Sexual Offences Bill, Succession Act and Chattels Transfer Act were enacted, and the Youth Venture Capital Fund a Youth Labour Programme was established. Following the discovery of oil and gas, the Association succeeded in having included a provision to achieve parity in the governing body of the national oil company. Progressively the gender disparity gap has been reduced.

In the next government, a Women’s Economic Empowerment Fund will be set up to support women’s access to funds. To address the consequences of armed conflict and statelessness in northern Uganda, parliament organised special sittings to discuss the plight of the victims of war and affected communities, presented recommendations to government and supported special programmes for northern Uganda for post-war trauma management, especially for vulnerable people (women and girls) severely violated by the war.

Parliament also intensified work with national and international organisations including the media to raise awareness, Inter-Parliamentary Union and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to develop a blueprint for maternal health for all members of parliament in the world. The remaining challenge is to domesticate CEDAW into Uganda’s national laws.

Although parliaments were not included in the design of the SDGs, Uganda’s parliament has committed to:

1. Ensure the SDG agenda is available to all parliaments and their input included in the final text;
2. Evaluate the MDGs performance and identify the gaps;
3. Draw up an action plan for the implementation of the SDGs and establish timelines and targets for implementation;
4. Demand an annual report from our governments on the performance of the SDGs; and,
5. Establish within parliaments SDGs Committees where possible for oversight.

Parliaments are an embodiment of resilience and should remain well informed and relevant to the people they represent.

Comments from members

The Government of Nigeria: The Federal administration of President Goodluck Jonathan recently budgeted N220 billion (£1 billion) for women’s economic empowerment in the country, which is very encouraging. The ministry is now setting up mechanisms to enable women to access the funds. President Jonathan has the
political will, and through political appointments increased the participation of women in cabinet to 55 per cent.

Contesting elections in Nigeria is capital intensive especially for women. Government has established a trust fund for women politicians aspiring to contest elections. To support women’s political empowerment the ministry created six political offices across the country to build capacity and advocate women’s candidacy to the senate and national assembly and increase women’s participation in decision-making in political parties, the gatekeepers to politics, and in the independent electoral commission. Nigeria has succeeded in domesticating CEDAW by enacting the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Bill, 2015. The challenge is sensitisation of society and key officials and effective monitoring and implementation of the law for the benefit of women, girls and other vulnerable sections of the population.

The governments of Fiji and Papua New Guinea have been tracking trafficking of women and children for the past 10 years, and plan to strengthen trade agreements through parliaments. Challenges remain in terms of women in political participation. Fiji currently has a progressive constitution and national gender policy and plans to increase financing for women for the 2018 elections to attract more participation. The former Minister for Women, Dr Jiko Luveni, is the first female Speaker of Parliament in the country. She is strategising with the National Women’s Machinery to realise change through parliament for the country. As Minister, Dr Luveni set up an innovative initiative in the communities of Fiji, ‘Violence Free Villages’, where the Head of State awarded villages with no-reports of violence within a period of time. One such village is Volivoli, which has risen to national fame in Fiji.

The former Speaker of the Pakistan Parliament was a woman, and she established the first women’s parliamentary caucuses in the national and provincial assemblies, which cut across party lines. Most progressive legislations ranging from sexual harassment at the work place to anti-women cultural practices including forced marriages, denial of inheritance and exchanged marriages were enacted under her stewardship. She was able to institutionalise standing committees in parliament and provincial commissions to push the women’s agenda favourably. She mobilised for electoral reforms with political parties to commit 30 per cent representation of women in all decision-making bodies within political parties, giving women a 10 per cent ticket to stand and contest direct elections. As a result, in the last elections 22 per cent of women were elected to the national and provincial assemblies.

The Government of Solomon Islands, for the first time, passed the Family Protection Bill last year to ensure a safe environment for women and girls. For many years Solomon Islands had only male representation in parliament. It now has one woman, which is a positive step forward.

The Ugandan Minister updated on the ministry’s contribution to developing programmes for reproductive health for young people, addressing teenage pregnancies, early marriages, self-abortions, sexual offences of children, and the burden of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV and AIDS.
Session Three: Women’s Political Participation, Good Practices from the Commonwealth

Women’s political participation, good practices from the Commonwealth

Ms Ogunsanya, interim head of the Gender Section chaired the afternoon session.

Regional presentations on women’s political leadership

Three experts focused on good practices from the Commonwealth on women’s political participation. Dr Jeannine Comma from Barbados and board member of the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM), focused on gender related issues and the role of the public service in achieving the Beijing+20 and post-2015 agenda. The Pacific Region has the least representation of women in the world with an average of 4.2 per cent mostly from Australia and New Zealand. Ms Seema Naidu from the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat shared the important work of her organisation in advancing the political participation and leadership of women in the Pacific region. Lastly, the Asia-Pacific regional director of UN Women presented from Bangkok on the role of UN agencies in building the capacity of women to effectively participate in politics in the Asia region.

Presentation Dr Jeanine Comma

The Commonwealth Caribbean, politics and decision-making, women’s positive contribution and some success stories and recommendations going forward formed part of her presentation. There are 12 English-speaking Caribbean sovereign states: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St Lucia, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago.

These countries are connected by history, geography, colonialism, slavery, cultural experiences, demographics, and to some extent the economy. For the most part all gained...
independence between 1962 and 1983. Despite shared experiences and similarities, diversity exists in the political and social landscapes.

Regional groupings include the Caribbean Community referred as CARICOM, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, a single market economy (CSME), and the Caribbean Court of Justice. Democratic traditions retained the colonial Westminster model but with strong and distinct individual identities and interests. The Caribbean Commonwealth is not a homogenous grouping but there exists a fair measure of collaboration. Political decision-making respects equal opportunities, equal access and equal participation.

Most constitutions guarantee anti-discriminatory laws, and patriarchal societies are endemic with slow progress since Beijing in 1995. Global instruments such as CEDAW and Beijing are yet to be domesticated. The selection process into politics discriminates against women during the nomination campaign. Women are forced to compete with men for nominations in large measure while balancing work and family responsibilities.

Between 1992 and 2005, only 13 per cent of women contested the general elections. Dr Barrow-Giles, author of ‘Women in Caribbean Politics’ (2011), stated that even though women were able to vote and stand for elections for over 60 years in the Caribbean, the region still lacks a critical mass of women as key political decision-makers. More political space needs to be created to accommodate women’s engagement and participation.

Women in the Commonwealth Caribbean have demonstrated considerable leadership in the communities and informal organisations as well as in public offices, and are recognised and respected as leaders and positive decision-makers. More political space needs to be created to accommodate women’s engagement and participation.

Women in the Commonwealth Caribbean have demonstrated considerable leadership in the communities and informal organisations as well as in public offices, and are recognised and respected as leaders and positive decision-makers. Women have gained a constituency base with the electorate over time. Despite this the ratio of women to men in politics remains very low.

In-depth research revealed even with a female Prime Minister in Trinidad and Tobago, women only occupied 28 per cent of seats in the lower house and 19 per cent of the seats in the upper house. Similarly in Jamaica, women only occupy 22 per cent of seats in parliament. The country with the lowest percentage of women in parliament is Belize with 3 per cent of seats in the lower house and 38 per cent in the Senate. Antigua and Barbuda has the highest representation of women in the upper house or senate with 41 per cent. Grenada (33%) and Guyana (35%) have surpassed the 30 per cent global target in single parliaments.

In Barbados 35 per cent of permanent secretaries are women, giving women direct control over the day-to-day decisions within the different political ministries. However, there is significantly slow increase of women at decision-making levels particularly at the public service level. A CIDA funded project supports the Caribbean leadership project for women and seeks gender balance at all levels in the public service.

Studies have shown that women constitute the backbone of political parties in rallying and lobbying for their male counterparts in the region but are generally excluded from the institutions of political power and from the forefront of the electoral process. Statistics on the Commonwealth Caribbean show that education has been a source of empowerment for women. More women have been attaining higher levels of learning and qualifications, making them more marketable in the workforce.

Across the board, the majority of higher performers at the secondary level are female, and every year at Universities graduation approximately 75 per cent of the graduates are female. Yet, women do not necessarily reach the highest levels of decision-making in academic institutions, or become CEOs in private or corporate boards. Dr Comma experienced the same sentiment; she is the second female out of 10 members on the professional board of two prestigious organisations. Legislation will prohibit interlocking board memberships, giving room for diversity and gender equality.

Currently there are two female prime ministers in the region: Portia Simpson-Miller of Jamaica and Kamla Persad-Bissessar of Trinidad and Tobago. Eugenia Charles, Dominica’s first and only female Prime Minister was also the longest serving prime minister in the history of Dominica. Mia Mottley was the first female to lead the oldest political party in Barbados. Kerrynn Ifill is the first female President of the Senate of Barbados (since 2012) and is also visually impaired. Janet Jagan was Guyana’s first woman President and Jacqui Quinn Leandro was the first woman to
win a seat in the general elections of Antigua and Barbuda. These successes of women leaders signal a positive opening for greater participation of women in the highest political offices in the Commonwealth Caribbean.

Research has indicated the deficiencies and a multi-sectoral approach is required to deal with patriarchy and promote women’s equality in the Caribbean. Implementation of actionable strategies is weak, and should be realistic and time-bound to measure milestones in partnership with governments, business community, academics and civil society.

To support women’s effective participation, training is key, by targeting established women leaders aspiring to join politics. Funding from national, regional and international bodies is required to enable institutions and organisations to engage women to alleviate fears and reluctance to participate in politics. The right training can create stronger decision-makers, leaders and game changers. Sharing of good practices should be explored for leadership of women in public and private sectors and boards to create an enabling environment.

Admittedly, National Women’s Machineries across the Caribbean have established women’s bureaus within governments as a measure to reduce the barriers to women’s participation. The bureaus have been able to promote political appointments of women into government positions. Moreover, sustainability of machineries to directly influence policy and adequate resourcing is critical and remains a policy debate for the region.

Regional review of the Beijing Platform for Action indicated that regional statistical institutions had insufficient knowledge on how best to use the strategies proffered to effectively address the unequal treatment of women and men, and existing databases and methodologies for decision-making.

Presentation Roberta Clarke

UN Women’s role is central to ending the growing inequalities between and within countries towards achieving ecological sustainability, economic growth, inclusive governance, equitable distribution of benefits, and allocation of resources by and multilateral systems.

In 1995, the global average of women in parliament was about 12 per cent. Twenty years later the global average is 22 per cent. This is not a 100 per cent increase but less than 10 per cent average, with the Asia, Caribbean and Pacific regions lagging behind in terms of women elected to parliament. This is a major setback for the Commonwealth in achieving the global target of 30 per cent. Worse still, there are some countries without any women in parliament and at least two are Commonwealth members.

The representation of women at the local government level is more encouraging. For example, 37 per cent of members in India’s local government structures are women, 30 per cent in New Zealand, and 28 per cent in Australia and a country average of 27 per cent in the Caribbean region, with 32 per cent in Trinidad and Tobago. This rise can be attributed to the nexus or the geographic proximity between candidates and the electorate, requiring limited funds to run a local campaign. It allows women to nurture a constituency and gain political experience for the national level.

However, women’s limited participation and decision-making manifests in other areas of governance, particularly the representation of women in ministerial portfolios. Only four countries have 50 per cent women ministerial representation in cabinets in the world. Globally, 70 per cent of government ministers are women with the majority of them overseeing social sectors such as education, social development, the family and culture, which are key to sustainable life, community and individual resilience and wellbeing.

On the other hand, women represent over 50 per cent in senior official or managerial levels in many countries, for example in Jamaica the figure is as high as 59 per cent. Research has shown a direct correlation between the high representation of women in public service and closing of the gender gap. Fiji is at number 5 on the global gender equality index, with 13 per cent of women in parliament. Similarly, the Philippines is in the top 10 countries to have closed the gender gap, and 51 per cent of senior official positions in the civil service are held by women but only 14 per cent of women in parliament.

The discrepancy between women’s access to the highest levels of decision-making at middle management in the public sector and women’s...
access to parliament is clear. In the former case women have made great strides despite the persistent challenges of financial constraints, lack of access, low influential networks, and weak political alliances. However, these same barriers have proved counter intuitive for women’s parliamentary success, which is determined by meritocracy based on women’s competencies, education and dedication.

Countries like Canada and the UK are at the apex of human development having good indices, social development, universal access to health care, decent education, social protection, yet Canada has 25 per cent of women in parliament and ranks number 48, while the UK has 23 per cent and ranks at number 56 in the world. This is in complete contrast to African countries like Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles and South Africa, which have low levels of education but are in the top 10 of countries that buoyantly represent the interests of women in decision-making. Further research is required to surface these discrepancies to learn good practices across regions.

Patriarchy is a strong and enduring force. There is a need to re-educate society and change restrictive gender norms to overcome persistent stereotypes and patriarchal monoxide, to ensure women gain access to spheres of influence. To realise change the litmus test is to hold women and men in leadership accountable to social justice, and responsiveness to create an enabling environment free from corruption and patronage where women can participate with integrity, then cultures will shift. For example, with over 1 million women in local governance in India, the entrenched gender norms are slowly changing.

The imposition of quotas and affirmative action are temporary special measures that have advanced parity in politics with a level of integrity. Moreover, the overwhelming networking role of civil society organisations and the women’s movement within the state, to build capacity and for advocacy and lobbying, demonstration marches, have occasioned institutional reforms in the political architecture of many countries.

UN women have been working at the global, regional and national levels to support networks of development practitioners, women’s rights activists and political activists to move forward the parity and social justice agenda through capacity building, voter education, civic education and sensitisation campaigns. In Asia, UN Women supported capacity building for over 67,000 women leaders in village councils engaged with the Panchayat system, in partnership with the Ministry for Local Government. The council leaders take forward pressing issues such as domestic violence, sex education and trafficking in their communities.

In Pakistan phenomenal work has been achieved with the electoral commission and the National Database Registration Authority having registered more than 40 million women in the last election. Thus 86 per cent of women were registered for the last election, an increase from 44 per cent. Imagine the difference overtime with voter engagement between election cycles, which will strengthen women's candidacy and shift cultural norms. Using the slogan of UN Women’s Executive Director, we have to ‘step it up towards planet 50–50’ to empower all of humanity.

Presentation Ms Seema Naidu

The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) recently appointed the first female Secretary General, and the deputy secretaries general are also women. Further, 68 per cent of professional women are employed at the Secretariat with 70 per cent of women as support staff. Patriarchal monoxide boils down in the Pacific islands. Despite various interventions, the cultural context plays an important role. Political roles are accorded to female chiefs or matriarchs. In the Republic of the Marshall Islands it is matrilineal so land is passed to the mothers, yet women remain under-represented in the public arena. Women’s ability to exercise leadership and participate in decision-making processes is often relegated, unsupported and overlooked. Women with the title of Chief are treated with high regard in Samoa. In Palau, women are second chiefs or matriarchs, and accompany the male chief. Patriarchal monoxide needs to be addressed.

The Pacific region has 4.2 per cent of women represented in parliament a rise from 3.6 per cent within three years. Multisectoral strategies employed to achieve this positive feat are highlighted as follows:

a. International and regional support provided by multiple agencies such as UNDP, UN Women, Forum Secretariat and women’s movement to build capacity and confidence of women to stand and contest the elections.
Unexpectedly, women candidates performed very well. Seven women were elected in Fiji, one in Solomon Islands and three in Papua New Guinea.

b. Temporary special measures have had limited impact in creating an enabling environment. In two countries the legislation of quotas has languished for almost a decade waiting to be passed by parliament and the constitutional amendment of two-thirds majority required by law. This signals the lack of political will to effect change. Samoa took a bold and progressive stand; it passed a 10 per cent quota as a temporary measure and developed appropriate strategies for implementation to allow women to exercise their rights to participate in politics.

c. At the municipal level, the representation of women in local government remains very poor. Vanuatu passed a quota of 38 per cent in 2010, and only one women councilor was elected. Now five women councilors were elected in the last elections, a sign the persistent stereotypes against women is breaking.

d. Women still play critical roles in community leadership, but this is yet to translate into the public domain, which is still reserved for men and boys. National, regional and international organisations are pushing the agenda as a human rights issue at all levels.

e. Research commissioned on the representation of women in government boards, indicated the enabler is politically affiliated, and community leadership and education is critical. Men who did not complete high school overtake women with two degrees to sit on airport or resource boards receiving better sitting allowances. Women are largely concentrated on the boards of social services.

f. Advocating for political will, recognising the vulnerability and the fragility of the Pacific island states. Climate change disasters such as the Category 5 cyclone affecting homes and people’s lives in Vanuatu and Kiribati, also limits women’s leadership at any level.

g. Forum leaders, in response to the issues affecting the Pacific region, adopted the Pacific framework for regionalism. The framework centres on regional co-operation and integration on all issues including gender equality, human rights, inclusivity, equality and equity to enable the region to move forward towards the next 20 years of Beijing.

h. In 2012, leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum recognised the high incidence of violence against women and the increasing prevalence of maternal deaths, STIs and HIV in the region. The limited access of women to sexual, reproductive and health rights resulted in a strong political commitment adopted by pacific leaders in a gender equality declaration. The declaration focused on six areas including women’s decision-making and leadership.

i. Strengthened partnerships between the Forum Secretariat and Secretariat of the Pacific community with other development partners and South-South co-operation have proved effective in the implementation of the declaration, and defined a reporting framework, with targets and indicators aligned to the global frameworks – including the SDGs, as a positive step forward. As a result of effective monitoring and tracking of results annually, some Pacific Islands have met some of the MDGs indicators.

j. Capacity to report at the national level is a big challenge. Soft peer review mechanisms have been established by the Forum to monitor the effectiveness of affirmative action measures for accountability. The themes of the triennial meetings of women’s ministers also focus on key issues prevalent in the region to sensitise on key issues, monitor progress, and share strategies and successful practices.

The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat is going through a restructuring exercise that may lead to some positive changes. Further initiatives targeting boys include engaging and mentoring on the practice of gender equality and women’s empowerment. In the Pacific, barriers to women’s empowerment and women’s human rights are rooted in the culture. Religious men and women need to take transformative steps in churches and mosques, and advocate for transformative leadership in committees and in the church/mosque hierarchy. For example, the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre runs interesting programmes in
collaboration with religious and community leaders on human rights, gender equality, tolerance, mutual acceptance and understanding. This has led to a more appreciation of the standards and also rethinking of moral values in the Pacific.

Comments from members

The Government of Fiji recommended that implementing strategies of the Forum should align the triennial meetings of women’s ministers with the meetings of finance ministers and health ministers in the region. Developing more positive messaging as opposed to emasculating men and boys will build upon the Christian Bible messages to ensure young boys and girls are empowered.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago: Importantly, the training of women for participation in political life is an excellent initiative organised by the network of NGOs of Trinidad and Tobago with the support of UN Women. The training of women proved effective for women’s participation in local governance to pursue leadership positions without affirmative action. Sensitising men and boys penetrated deeply patriarchal societies to accommodate women’s inclusion in the political process.

The Government of Pakistan appreciated the connection between the women’s movement, national machineries and parliament. The current parliament does not have such connections with activists, thereby limits the positive experience of strategising for cutting edge issues relevant for the Pakistan society.

The Government of Bahamas has a female Governor General, Head of the Central Bank, Director General of Tourism, Attorney General, Chief Magistrate, Head of the Court of Appeal to name a few, and nine of the 15 magistrates are female. In the last general election over 18,000 more women than men registered to vote, yet women occupy only 19 per cent of women in parliament. The role of religious men in women’s empowerment should be considered as an intervening strategy.

The Government of Solomon Islands: For the first time in 20 years, 28 female candidates contested the parliamentary elections in 2014 and only one woman got into parliament.

The Government of South Africa: Women need to be sensitised to overcome negative cultural practices. Women tend to keep patriarchy alive, teaching children and passing on to future generations practices such as female genital cutting. Women should take a stronger stand to eliminate the tendencies of patriarchy.

The Government of Australia for such a progressive country, also experiences some persistent problems in these areas, and falls behind the 30 per cent parliamentary representation. Women are very well represented in the public service but declines in seniority, and 30 per cent of women are federal justices and magistrates. The public service traditionally drives capacity programmes to encourage female representation in political parties in partnership with women’s movements and civil society organisations.

The Government of Singapore is reaching out and engaging with the ‘old boys’ network’ and the private sector to sensitis and subtly change mind-sets on the value systems that hinder women’s participation on boards. At the same, there have been increases in mentoring for women, sponsorships of capable candidates and introductions to nominating committees.

The Government of Cameroon adopted the 30 per cent quota in 1997 and there was non-action for over a decade. Prior to the 2013 municipal and legislative elections, the country adopted an electoral code that integrated a gender component. Women’s groups, female politicians and civil society organisations used the code to compel parties to draw up a list of women participating in the elections in accordance with the list party system. Other strategies in support of women’s political campaigns included a training manual on political practice, advocacy with political parties and practical actions to internalise the national laws. As a result, the representation of women in the national assembly doubled from 13 per cent in 2004 to 31 per cent.

The Government of Uganda: There is great merit for the critical mass in leadership in parliament, public service and in local governance. Documenting key processes and good practices as case studies emphasises evidence, resilience and way forward.
The Government of Grenada: There is need to examine the roles of women in the patriarchal system and understand historically matriarchal cultures, and draw on the good lessons of traditions and cultures.

Representative Women with Disabilities, Samoa: In the Pacific Declaration, women with disabilities are not addressed and as such women with disabilities continue to experience stigma and discrimination. The exclusion of women with disabilities limits intervening strategies and funding to effectively address the particular interests of women and girls with disability within the Beijing Declaration and SDGs. A policy framework should be defined to support women with disabilities at the national, regional and international levels to address violence against women, poverty, and enjoy human rights, improved quality of life and enabling environment to participate in politics.
Annexes
# Agenda

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<td>Hon Hajiya Zainab Maina, Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Nigeria, and Chair of CGPMG</td>
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<td>Update on Commonwealth Secretariat work programme</td>
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<td>Ms Kemi Ogunsanya, Interim Head of Gender Section,</td>
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<td>Mr Yogesh Bhatt, Head, Strategic Planning and Evaluation Division</td>
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<td>Priorities from 10WAMM and 2013 CHOGM</td>
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<td>Update on 2015 CHOGM Women’s Forum, Malta</td>
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<td>Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS)</td>
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<td>11.00 – 11.30</td>
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<td>Dr Shirin Chaudhury, Hon Speaker Bangladesh Parliament and Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association</td>
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<td>Title: Women’s Political Achievements within Beijing+20 and the post-2015 Development Agenda</td>
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<td>Women’s Political Leadership within Beijing+20 and the post-2015 Development Agenda: Successes and Challenges from the Commonwealth</td>
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<td>Parliamentary experience of Uganda within Beijing+20 and post-2015 development agenda</td>
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<td>Rt Hon Rebecca Kadaga, Speaker Uganda Parliament and Chair Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians</td>
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<td>Positive contribution of public servants within Beijing+20 and post-2015 development agenda</td>
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<td>Dr Jeannine Comma, Chief Executive Officer/Director Cave Hill School of Business, University of the West Indies, Barbados</td>
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<td>13.30 – 15.00</td>
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<td>SESSION III: Panel on Women’s Political Participation: Good Practices from the Commonwealth Continued</td>
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<td>Women’s Political Leadership within Beijing+20 and the post-2015 Development Agenda: Successes and Challenges from the Commonwealth</td>
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<td>Role of the UN in strengthening the capacity of women leaders in the public service and local governance in the Caribbean and Asia regions</td>
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<td>Ms Roberta Clarke, Regional Director, UN Women Asia and Pacific Regional Office, Bangkok</td>
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<td>The role of the Pacific Islands Forum in advancing women’s political participation and strengthening the capacity of women leaders in the Pacific region</td>
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<td>Ms Seema Naidu, Gender Officer, Pacific Islands Forum</td>
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<td>Plenary discussions</td>
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<td>National women’s machineries may wish to share their country experiences, good practices and challenges specifically on women’s political leadership at the following levels during the plenary discussions on:</td>
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<td>3. Public service</td>
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<td>4. Local governance</td>
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<td>16.15 – 17.00</td>
<td>Agreed Outcomes</td>
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Chair’s Report on the 13th Meeting of the CGPMG to the 2014 Annual Consultation of National Women’s Machineries

Introduction

the Commonwealth Ministers of Women’s Affairs established the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG) in 2005 as a mechanism for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PoA). The 13th CGPMG meeting was held yesterday, on 14 March 2015 in New York and I am pleased to present key outcomes of our deliberations to you all.

Sub-regional CGPMG meetings

Sub-regional CGPMG meetings were held during the year for Southern Africa and East/West Africa. They were both held in the wings of regional gender meetings. This reinforces the principle that such meetings provide great opportunities for members to get together to learn and share good practices.

Members from the sub-regional groupings shared successes attained since our last meeting and I am happy to report that progress in PoA implementation is being recorded. Work areas under focus and issues discussed at the meeting include equal economic independence, equal pay, women on boards, gender-based violence, gender supportive legislation including constitutional reform, parliamentary participation, gender mainstreaming, women’s entrepreneurship, women in decision-making at all levels, access to finance and shared parenting. Also discussed was the importance of ensuring that the future Commonwealth gender priorities resonate with the Sustainable Development Goals while maintaining a Commonwealth identity and niche in the global discourse. The importance of strengthening the critical partnership between governments and civil society for achieving gender results, which is a unique feature of the group, was also stressed.

End term review report of the PoA

As you know the PoA ends in 2015 and an End Term Review (ETR) report will be produced. The production of a robust and relevant ETR report, which will guide Commonwealth gender priorities in the post-2015 Development Agenda, is important. You will hear today from the Commonwealth Secretariat on the processes and procedures to be followed.

At yesterday’s meeting, members:

i. Endorsed the evaluation framework for the ETR report as revised and case study production process.

ii. Agreed to provide inputs into the terms of reference for the ETR consultancy to ensure it reflects the needs of both governments and civil society organisations and to advertise it widely.

iii. Agreed to support the evaluation team including by being interviewed and supplying data.

iv. Agreed to continue to provide case study material to the Commonwealth Secretariat.

v. Agreed that the CGPMG is an essential body, which will continue for the duration of the ETR process. Future mechanisms for monitoring forthcoming Commonwealth gender priorities and strengthening accountability of governments and critical stakeholders will be guided by the recommendations from the ETR report, subject to the approval of Commonwealth Ministers of Women’s Affairs. Clarity on the group’s purpose, role and mandate will draw on lessons and experience over the past 10 years to ensure that it does not duplicate other gender bodies and frameworks but leverages the Commonwealth’s advantage and niche perspectives, through innovation and strategic approaches.
vi. Agreed to strengthen communication with High Commissioners who can help raise Commonwealth gender priorities with their respective governments.

vii. Accepted the offer from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Executive Committee Chair to facilitate the presentation of the ETR report to parliaments across the Commonwealth.

viii. Agreed that guidelines for reporting based on the Commonwealth gender accountability template be developed by the Commonwealth Secretariat and circulated for CGPMG’s inputs as part of ETR process.

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

Women’s Forum 2015

As you may recall, CGPMG members have long stressed the importance of putting the Commonwealth gender commitments higher on the agenda of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGMs). The Secretary-General supported this call and there will now be an official Women’s Forum held alongside the CHOOGM in 2015. The Women’s Forum was officially launched on 6 March in Malta and we will hear more about it during this meeting.

At yesterday’s meeting, members:

i. Agreed this is a very important event and urged that modalities for sourcing resources to attend be explored.

ii. Agreed that civil society should also be given a voice at the forum.

I urge you therefore to liaise with appropriate authorities to ensure that your government’s preparations for CHOOGM includes adequate representation of your respective NWMs and participation of civil society at the forum.

Eleventh Commonwealth Women’s Affairs Ministers Meeting

Planning is now underway for 11WAMM in September 2016 in Samoa and the CGPMG will convene in the margins of the meeting to endorse the ETR report. Discussions will include the role of the CGPMG and any future mechanisms to ensure strong, effective monitoring and accountability of all governments to the Commonwealth’s future gender commitments.
Annex III

Background Note: Women’s Political Leadership within Beijing+20


Background and Rationale for the Secretariat’s work on Women’s Political Leadership

The theme for the 2015 Annual Consultation of NWMs is Women’s Political Leadership within Beijing+20 and the Post-2015 Development Agenda. As the world commemorates 20 years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in New York, the Secretariat plans to acknowledge the contribution of the Commonwealth at advancing the participation of women in political decision-making at all levels. The MDGs and other international instruments have been catalysts to increase the representation of women in leadership roles and decision-making positions by 2015. The United Nations and the Commonwealth Secretariat have committed to assisting their member countries to reach gender equality within the proscribed time frame. International organisations, development institutions and civil society have also contributed to reaching these global commitments.

The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015 (PoA) provides the framework to advance gender equality across the Commonwealth. The PoA draws on international commitments for the realisation of women’s rights enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform for Action, Millennium Development Goals and other agreements on health and education targets. The PoA calls on governments to introduce measures to promote at least 30 per cent representation of women in parliament, government and business by 2015. Notably, a major milestone for the Commonwealth was the significance of having the first woman Chair of the Commonwealth, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, and she handed over to Prime Minister Julia Gillard of Australia in the same year.

The comparative advantage of the Commonwealth revolves around the principle of common values in diversity, building and strengthening existing partnerships for the achievement of gender equality and empowering women as equal partners with men to strengthen democracy and development. Democracy is a fundamental value for the Commonwealth and this has been well articulated in various documents notably the 1991 Harare Declaration, the 2009 Trinidad and Tobago Affirmation on Commonwealth Values and Principles, the 2013 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting Communiqué, the outcomes of the 10th Commonwealth Women’s Affairs Ministers’ Meeting (10WAMM), and UN Women, Peace and Security Resolutions 1325, 1888, 1889 and 1960.

Our achievements in the Commonwealth often mirror the trends across the international arena. The global target of 30 per cent of women in decision-making across all sectors was adopted at the 5th Commonwealth Women’s Affairs Ministers Meeting (5WAMM) in 1996. It is encouraging to note that some Commonwealth countries have gradually been able to achieve this target in parliament and local governance. In 2015, at least 14 member countries have reached and surpassed the global target of 30 per cent of women in the lower and upper houses of parliaments. Rwanda tops the list with 64 per cent women, closely followed by Seychelles with 43 per cent and South Africa with 41 per cent. A third of members have a minimum of 20 per cent representation of women in parliaments, and the share of women ministers averages at 20 per cent.

The presence of women at the highest level of national government is even more elusive. The year 2012 recorded the highest number, seven, of women leaders in the Commonwealth. However, in 2015, only 22 of 193 Heads of State and/or Government globally are women, and three are from the Commonwealth: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed of Bangladesh, Prime Minister Kamla...
Persad-Bissessar of Trinidad and Tobago, and Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller of Jamaica. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II has also been represented by women Governors-General across the regions of the Commonwealth in Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Canada, Grenada, New Zealand and St Lucia. In addition, women leaders have also served as Deputy Presidents and Speakers of the Houses of Assemblies; there are only 17 Commonwealth Women Speakers out of 39 globally from 189 Parliaments. At the local government level, a handful of members have reached and surpassed the global target of 30 per cent.

Despite the successes, women’s minimal leadership role in executive and political spheres remains a serious concern. This is fuelled by entrenched unconscious biases, which hinder their effective participation in politics and leadership roles. In response, many countries have continued to strengthen inclusive systems of government through the introduction of accountability measures. There has also been a calculated effort to increase women’s representation through the adoption and implementation of quotas and other affirmative policies. Yet, the representation of women goes beyond numbers to include factors of effective leadership.

Achieving global targets for women’s representation

10WAMM called for strengthened systems to increase the representation of women in decision-making at all levels, including through affirmative policies and electoral reform, where appropriate, for advancing women’s effective political leadership. The Commonwealth is committed to increasing support for the advancement of women’s effective leadership at the national, regional and local levels to enable members to reach the agreed minimum of 30 per cent. A number of initiatives have been hosted and supported by the Secretariat and highlighted as follows.

• Regional colloquia on women’s political leadership – In 2011 and 2012 the Secretariat convened two regional colloquia on women’s political leadership for the Caribbean and Africa regions. Delegates agreed, respectively, the 'Port of Spain' and 'Accra' Consensus Documents, which strongly called for the increased political representation of women in decision-making in accordance with global instruments, removal of all barriers that discriminate against women’s effective participation and leadership in political party structures, and strengthening of national gender/women machineries for effective implementation, monitoring and mainstreaming.

• International Advocacy on women’s political participation –
  – In September 2011, the Commonwealth Chairperson-in-Office, Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar of Trinidad and Tobago, led an international advocacy on Women’s Political Participation in the margins of the 66th UN General Assembly, attended by women Prime Ministers, Presidents, Governors General and world leaders from international and regional agencies. The meeting resulted in a Joint Statement signed by female world leaders, seeking adoption by member states to further strengthen mechanisms for women’s equitable representation and participation in politics and governance.

  – The Government of Australia convened the Special Side Event: Empowering Women to Lead in wings of the 2011 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Perth, led by Prime Minister Julia Gillard of Australia, which further highlighted the call to governments to support women’s effective leadership.

  – The 2011 Commonwealth Day theme celebrated ‘Women as Agents of Change’ in leadership across all spheres including agriculture, education, finance, health, infrastructure, media and politics in the private and public sectors and civil society structures. The theme was widely celebrated across the Commonwealth.

• Universal application of good practices in Rwanda – In March 2015 the Secretariat will share good practices on the impact of women’s political leadership on democracy and development in Rwanda at a side-event in
New York in partnership with the Government of Rwanda, as a commendable and universal model for the Commonwealth and globally.

- **Research and publications** – The Secretariat has produced publications on:
  - The impact of women’s leadership on democracy and development: case studies from the Commonwealth. Identified countries include Bangladesh, India, New Zealand and South Africa. The 2013 publication focused on fully harnessing women as a developmental resource in governance systems, critically appraised women’s leadership roles, and interrogated positive trends of women’s engagement in politics, constitutions and national policy making.
  - Trends analysis on Women’s Political Participation in the Commonwealth was produced and shared at 10WAMM in Dhaka, Bangladesh in June 2013.
  - Information Brief on Gender and Political Development in the Commonwealth

**Strategies for Intervention**

The Commonwealth believes in the potential of its women to bring about real change using its programmes to develop their capacity to be change agents for development and democracy. A critical mass of women in decision-making is pertinent to achieve political transformation to ensure women’s effective participation, without necessary allegiance to the political elite or traditional norms existing in particular political systems that dictate how women actively participate or get involved in politics. Political party and electoral reforms will only be successful if aimed at strengthening women’s political participation through changing of policies and mechanisms that will guarantee the rights and entitlements of women in all public decision-making processes.
The Commonwealth Heads of National Women’s Machineries (NWMs) meet annually on the eve of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (UN CSW) Session in New York. As International Women’s Day will be celebrated by members’ in-countries on Sunday 8 March 2015, the NWM meeting will take place on Sunday 15 March 2015.

The theme for the meeting will focus on ‘Women’s Political Leadership within Beijing+20 and the Post-2015 Development Agenda’. It is noteworthy to highlight the contribution of the Commonwealth Secretariat at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, which called for 30 per cent representation of women across all sectors, adopted in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995.

The NWM meeting will include a business segment and capacity strengthening for members. The business meeting will present outcomes of the 13th Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG) on the End Term Review (ETR) processes, a presentation on the End Term Review Framework from the Commonwealth Secretariat Division for Strategic Planning and Evaluation, an update on the implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PoA), and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) Women’s Forum in Malta. The capacity strengthening part of the meeting will focus on the good practices employed by member states to increase the participation of women in cabinets, ministerial positions, public service, and local and community governance.

Discussions will draw on the successes and challenges experienced by Commonwealth countries in attaining the global target of 30 per cent representation of women at all levels of decision-making, and strengthening women’s leadership for sustainable democracy and development in the Commonwealth. The outcome of the meeting will feed into the on-going women in leadership research and side-events planned to identify good practices, strategies and mechanisms for strengthening inclusive participation.

Technical Meetings on Women’s Leadership

A number of technical meetings will be convened on women’s political leadership in collaboration with our partners as highlighted below:

13 March 2015 (AM) – Joint Commonwealth Secretariat and African Union (AU) Meeting on Women’s Political Leadership in collaboration with the Commonwealth Africa Section, Political Affairs Division, African Union Gender Directorate and African Union Political Affairs Division. The theme for the meeting is Beyond numbers: Women’s political leadership in delivering democracy and development in Africa.

As the world commemorates 20 years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in New York, the Commonwealth Secretariat Africa and Gender sections in partnership with the AU Political Section and Gender Directorate will convene a joint meeting, which aims to:

- Strengthen in practice the Commonwealth/AU partnership with the goal of developing a programme to strengthen women’s political participation that could be replicated across Africa and the Commonwealth.
- Identify successes, challenges and next steps relating to the meeting theme.
- Identify Africa’s gender priorities, as well as new and emerging trends and strategies that can be fed into the CHOGM 2015 Women’s Forum.
- Explore ways of assisting countries to implement the recommendations on gender contained in election observer reports from both the AU and the Commonwealth.
- Mainstream gender in the political work of both institutions.

13 March 2015 (PM) – High-Level Side-Event on Universal Application of the Rwanda Research Report on the Impact of Women’s Political Leadership on Democracy and Development in partnership with the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, Rwanda. The event will showcase
successful strategies and good practices employed by Rwanda to strengthen gender mainstreaming and increase the participation of women at all levels of decision-making as a commendable model from the Commonwealth.

14 March 2015 (10.00-15.00) - 13th Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group Meeting (CGPMG) CGPMG Civil Society Organisation (CSOs) Consultation - This unique working group brings together National Women’s Machineries (NWMs) and Civil Society Organisations from all regions to review progress and challenges to the implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015 (PoA). The annual global meeting will be chaired by the Gender Minister for Nigeria, and will discuss the CGPMG’s role in the End Term Review process of the PoA, advise on Commonwealth gender priorities within the context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and set the CGPMG work-plan for 2015-2016. This is a closed meeting.

Meeting Papers - Hard copies of meeting papers will NOT be available for the meeting but all papers can be found on the NWM workspace of Commonwealth Connects. If you are not signed up to the workspace please contact Kathy Daniel, Gender Programme Officer at the Commonwealth Secretariat on k.daniel@commonwealth.int or +44 20 7747 6468.

16 March 2015 (PM) – Joint Commonwealth Business Women and Commonwealth Secretariat event on Corporate Leadership. The event will feature a panel discussion with representatives from the private sector, government, Global Board Ready Women and Commonwealth Secretariat. The Secretariat will highlight the findings of its novel research on women on corporate boards, share good practice recommendations and advocate for further action to increase women’s representation on corporate boards in both the public and private sectors as a means of increasing women’s economic empowerment.
Annex V

Guidance Note: Country Reports on Women’s Political Leadership within Beijing+20

The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015 (PoA) finishes in 2015. An End Term Review (ETR) report will be produced outlining the policies, practices and mechanisms that have been successfully used to implement the PoA. As part of this process National Women’s Machineries (NWMs) have already been asked to provide short Country Action and Results Submissions focusing specifically on women’s political leadership at the following levels:

- Cabinet
- Parliament
- Public service
- Local governance

The deadline for submissions is Friday 20 February 2015 to Kathy Daniel, kdaniel@commonwealth.int.

The submissions should use the following format:

1. What was the rationale for the action? What problem was it intended to address or what opportunity was it intended to seize?
2. What was done, by whom, when and where?
3. What are the known results? What and where is the evidence for these results?
4. What are the most important lessons to draw from this experience? And what implications do they have for the Commonwealth?

Participants are not expected to make a presentation or a statement on these reports during the NWM meeting but will be expected to be able to use the information to identify one strategy or mechanism that has effectively advanced the participation of women in decision-making at all levels in your country which you will be able to share as part of the plenary discussions. This is intended to provide the annual consultation with key information on Women’s Political Leadership within Beijing+20 and post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals at the national, provincial and local/communal levels to enable discussion and draw on lessons learned.

NWMs are encouraged to share their country experiences, good practices and challenges through interactive discussion with the panel speakers in order to come up with joint Commonwealth strategies on how to address the issues and strengthen mechanisms that advance women’s effective leadership and political participation.

Please ensure that a copy of the report is made available to the Secretariat prior to the meeting.
Annex VI

Participants List

Australia
Ms Kate Wallace
Senior Adviser, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Bahamas
Ms Melvelyn Symonette
Senior Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Social Services and Community Development
Ms Christine Campbell
First Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Women’s Affairs

Bangladesh
Mr S M Latif
Private Secretary to State Minister
Dr Abul Hossain Hossain
Project Director, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
Ms Milky Sayeda
First Secretary, Consulate General of Bangladesh in New York

Botswana
Ms Pearl Matome
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs
Ms Thapelo Phuthego
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Ms Mogobe Mpho
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Fiji
Mrs Arieta Moceica
Director for Women, Ministry for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation
Ms Naomi Navoce
Gender and Youth Officer, Pacific Disability Forum

Grenada
Hon Delma Thomas, Minister
Ministry of Social Affairs
H E Mr Denis Antioine
Ambassador of Grenada to the United Nations

Jamaica
Mrs Sharon Coburn Robinson
Director Policy and Research, Jamaica Bureau of Women’s Affairs

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High Commissioner, Lesotho High Commission, London
Ms Samantha Jones
PA to the High Commissioner

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Mr Joseph Vella
Private Secretary, Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties

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Assistant Director of Women’s Affairs, Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development
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Senior Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations

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Chairperson, National Commission on the Status of Women

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Ms Hwee Seh Lim
Senior Director, Ministry of Social and Family Development

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Ms Keketso Maema
Chief Executive Officer, Commission for Gender Equality South Africa
Ms Mikateko Maluleke
Advisor, Department of Women
Ms Mmabatino Ramongoshi
Advisor, Department of Women
Hon Susan Shabangu
Minister, Department of Women
Hon Mildred Nelisiwe
Minister of Labour, Government
Miss Tumi Mogorosi
Researcher, Parliament
Thandi Modise
Chairperson, Parliament RSA
Mrs Florence Ramosana
Assistant, Parliament RSA
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Personal assistant, Government
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CHOGM Taskforce/ Women’s Forum Committee

Dr Claire Cassar  
Chairperson - Women’s Forum Sub Committee, Office of the Prime Minister

Ms Phyllis Muscat  
Head of Taskforce, Office of the Prime Minister

Other organisations present

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Member, WiLDAF Ghana

Ms Leila Asrari  
Public Affairs Officer, Royal Commonwealth Society

Mr M.A Kamal Billah  
Deputy Secretary, Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat

Commonwealth Secretariat

Dr Josephine Ojiambo  
Deputy Secretary-General (Political Development)

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Interim Head of Gender Section

Ms Sarah Kitakule  
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Ms Kathy Daniel  
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