
2018 Commonwealth Ministerial Meeting on Small States

Co-Chairs' Summary

Actions to Address Small States' Vulnerability

The Commonwealth Ministerial Meeting on Small States was convened in London, United Kingdom, on 17 April 2018 during the week of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). The Meeting was co-chaired by the CHOGM host, the Government of the United Kingdom, and by the Government of Fiji. It was attended by Ministers from 41 Commonwealth countries, including all 31 small states. International financial institutions, regional organisations and several development partners attended the meeting as observers.

Ministers recognised the vulnerabilities of small states, especially the existential threat of climate change and weather-related events. Ministers discussed solutions to address small states' unique challenges and vulnerabilities, including climate change and limited access to affordable finance. They proposed strategies for strengthened Commonwealth collaboration to meet the Sustainable Development Goals, reduce small states' vulnerabilities and to increase resilience, including through open and inclusive rules-based systems for trade, regional integration, action on oceans, renewable energy, capacity building initiatives, South-South cooperation, and institutional strengthening.

In particular, Ministers discussed efforts towards implementing the Paris Agreement, as well as considerations for the Talanoa Dialogue and the 2019 United Nations Secretary General's Climate Summit. Ministers emphasised the importance of raising the ambition to meet the Paris Agreement goals and the important role that small states played in negotiating those goals, particularly in pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Ministers also reiterated their commitments towards their Nationally Determined Contributions, as well as commitments towards the Green Climate Fund. Ministers recognised that with the current NDCs, the world is collectively headed toward around three degrees of warming. This makes the call for greater ambition and our full support of the Talanoa Dialogue process to be conducted between now and COP24 in Katowice Poland even more urgent and important. Ministers encouraged a stronger focus on climate change in Commonwealth discussions and programmes.

Ministers recognised the unique role of the Commonwealth in championing the issues of small states, highlighting that it was important that the Commonwealth Secretariat continued its role in coordinating action on small states' issues and challenging the international community to do more to address the vulnerability of small states. Ministers also supported the Commonwealth Secretariat's future plans towards supporting small states through a range of Commonwealth Toolkits, as well as through the Commonwealth Small States Centre of Excellence.

Ministers discussed opportunities for strengthened collaboration between Small States and the wider Commonwealth/international community to reduce climate vulnerabilities and to

encourage ambitious global action on climate change. In particular, Ministers highlighted the need for all states to strengthen their risk transfer, disaster preparedness, response and recovery, recognising the importance of efforts to implement the Sendai Framework. Ministers emphasised the challenges small states faced in financing post-disaster recovery efforts, particularly for those small states that already have a high debt burden.

Ministers agreed that it was important to continue discussions on mechanisms for disaster risk reduction at a technical level during the 2019 Global Biennial Conference on Small States, to be held in Samoa, and endorsed the theme of '*Building Resilience through Disaster Risk Reduction*'.

Ministers highlighted Commonwealth small states' challenges and solutions to accessing affordable finance. Ministers also recognised the Secretariat's efforts in supporting small states access a range of development finance resources, including: diaspora finance, climate finance and disaster finance, debt swaps for climate action; and through the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub and Commonwealth Small States Trade Finance Facility. Ministers further acknowledged the need to build international consensus on defining and measuring vulnerability, and supported the work of the Commonwealth Secretariat in this area. Ministers further noted that "de-risking" threatens to exclude small states from accessing global financial markets and regulated financial services and called for sustained international, regional and national efforts to identify effective solutions to combat this.

In addition, Ministers discussed the advocacy opportunities for raising the issue of small states' access to affordable finance and encouraged better alignment with low greenhouse gas and climate resilient development. Ministers also stressed the importance of the Commonwealth transitioning from advocacy to action and fostering greater collaboration among member states. Ministers further called on relevant international groups and norm-setting organisations, such as the G7, G20, Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development, and the World Bank to address the concerns of small states.

Ministers agreed that their next meeting would be held at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 2020, co-chaired by the host, and St Vincent and the Grenadines, a small state from the Caribbean.