

Committee of the Whole Meeting with Accredited Commonwealth Organisations

Submission by Commonwealth Associated Organisations
20 October 2015, Marlborough House



The Commonwealth

Commonwealth Associated Organisations: adding value to Commonwealth cooperation

Submission to the 2015 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting through the CHOGM Committee of the Whole, London, 20 October 2015

The Commonwealth Associated Organisations (AOs) work with other Commonwealth partners to ensure that the Commonwealth's added value can be maximised in a strategic way. The AOs look forward to more strategic engagement, particularly with the Commonwealth Secretariat, over the coming years to improve the global impact of the Commonwealth in achieving better democratic and development outcomes for its 2.2 million citizens.

AOs are committed to the fundamental principles of the Commonwealth as set out in the Commonwealth Charter and adhere to their active implementation. They support current efforts to strengthen and reform the Commonwealth and already add significant global value in their respective fields of operation on account of their distinct nature and capacities, in close cooperation with the Intergovernmental Commonwealth and Commonwealth civil society.

Associated Organisations

AOs are distinguished from non-governmental CSOs by the following characteristics:

- having been constituted by Commonwealth Governments with Commonwealth-wide membership/structures and governing bodies which are pan-Commonwealth in composition;
- a representative, legal organisational structure, mostly of a governmental/ quasi governmental nature, which in some AOs involves democratically elected representatives, including national ministers;
- a mandate derived from their own membership and respective governing bodies with high-level political endorsement from CHOGM;
- a distinct sphere of activity and remit critical to Commonwealth cooperation, defined in their respective strategic/business plans and entailing a spread of activities in a range of countries, regions and at pan-Commonwealth or global level;
- capacity to deliver on-the-ground a range of programmes and activities, as measured by their financial resources/budgets, staff and other relevant

capacity, including through their respective secretariats and regional structures, enhanced by significant in-kind support provided by their membership;

- measurable, results-oriented management and audits with regular monitoring and evaluation of activities;
- ability to add global value in their respective fields of operation by leveraging their formal and informal partnerships, stakeholder networks, resources and expertise.

A joined-up Commonwealth

Building on a consultation held with the Commonwealth Secretariat in March 2014 and its Accreditation Committee in September 2014, AOs submitted a paper to Commonwealth Governments in April 2015. In this paper, AOs expressed the view that having a joined-up approach to both Commonwealth policy formulation and practical implementation of technical and other programmes among all Commonwealth organisations, while drawing on each others' competencies and networks, will significantly increase the impact, branding and outreach of the Commonwealth in responding to member country needs. It will also strengthen the role of the Commonwealth globally, for example in defending fundamental political values and in taking forward the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In this context, AOs wish to recall the decisions of the 2011 CHOGM, notably EPG recommendation 87 which states: *'The Commonwealth Secretariat should coordinate its work with associated Commonwealth institutions, at annual meetings convened by the Secretary-General, to draw on their technical and other expertise so as to avoid utilising expensive external consultants, where possible, and reduce in-house costs. The Secretariat should allocate funds for which these organisations can apply to implement programmes for which they are better suited than the Secretariat'*.

AOs note the relevant subsequent decisions, including in respect of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2013/14-2016/17, designed to take forward the 2013 CHOGM decisions, and the closer cooperation between AOs and the Commonwealth Secretariat, which they feel needs to be of a strategic, long-term nature, rather than restricted to specific activities. In this regard, the AOs recall the survey carried out by the Commonwealth Secretariat in 2012 in response to which AOs proposed specific areas of cooperation under its Strategic Plan. They also look forward to closer cooperation with the Commonwealth Foundation, the Commonwealth of Learning and specific Commonwealth CSOs as appropriate.

AOs are appreciative of the formal accreditation to CHOGM, involving the granting of delegation status and observer status at senior official and ministerial meetings. They value the opportunity of the dedicated exchange held between AOs and foreign ministers, initiated at the 2013 CHOGM at which foreign ministers had expressed their interest in further building on and strengthening such exchanges; AOs accordingly look forward to the exchange planned for the 2015 CHOGM. They hope this exchange, and the parallel exchanges scheduled between ministers and the Intergovernmental Commonwealth and Commonwealth civil society, will ensure that Heads of Government are fully informed about the wide and diverse range of Commonwealth activities in support of member states. It will also assist in demonstrating the focus which AOs have on achieving concrete results and maximum efficiencies and impact through better harmonised Commonwealth activities.

AOs further welcome the opportunity which has been accorded to them by being included as part of the Commonwealth Secretariat delegations at key international meetings, including the 2014 SIDS Conference and the 2015 Conference on Financing for Development. They feel this has also added value and specialised knowledge and breadth to the Commonwealth contribution at those events.

To undertake their work as operational agencies in the Commonwealth more effectively, AOs look to member governments to provide them with bilateral funding, and encourage other Commonwealth multilateral support for their respective programmes. They would further wish that formal consideration is given to extending certain practical measures to them, such as issue of work permits and related privileges to AO technical experts in the field, similar to that provided to CFTC experts.

Promoting Respect and Understanding

At a time when the global community is facing many critical challenges, the Commonwealth has a great responsibility. All AOs are committed to encouraging respect and understanding in the Commonwealth, and AOs which have specific responsibilities for democratic dialogue, like CLGF and CPA, will work closely with the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Foundation, civil society and other partners in this regard. Likewise, AOs like CAPAM and CTO have a role in assisting member states to formulate public policy and educational responses. These will involve, where appropriate, policy to counteract prejudice and extremism and promote tolerance. In addition, CATA is supporting members in their bid to develop and enhance their capacities in domestic revenue mobilisation.

Crises, such as the current global refugee and migration crisis, pose special challenges. It would be valuable to share Commonwealth experiences dealing with responses to local and national emergencies, including dealing with large influxes of refugees and migrants. The problems faced, in particular, by small states like Malta or the Bahamas, in dealing with 'boat people' and refugees deserve attention. Likewise, it would be valuable to identify and share Commonwealth good practices in dealing with security issues, especially the threat of urban terrorism. This would merit looking in detail at security responses to recent terrorist attacks in Commonwealth cities, where a joined-up approach between central and local government and the security and emergency forces is essential.

Implementing the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

A coordinated Commonwealth response to implement the 2030 Agenda will add global value and ensure that member states, including small states, can effectively implement and monitor the SDGs.

AOs, with their specialised know-how and expertise, can assist and advise member states, especially small states with limited capacity, in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in particular areas. Most AOs will have specific responsibilities in taking forward some or all of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in their individual areas of responsibility: CLGF, which addressed the 2030 Agenda in its Gaborone Declaration-Local Government Vision 2030, will focus especially

on SDG 11 relating to creating inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements; CCM, as well as CLGF and CPA, will have key roles to play in implementing SDG 13 on climate change and its impacts; CAPAM, CLGF and CPA will wish to look at the governance provisions of SDG 16, especially building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Indeed, good governance underpins the attainment of all the SDGs. CATA and CTO want to advance the respective provisions of SDG 17 on finance and technology; CTO will also have a strong interest in SDGs 4(b), 5(b) and 9(c), where ICTs are expected to play a central role, as well as the new UN Technology Facilitation Mechanism. Implementing other SDGs will be relevant to most AOs, for example SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 16, or SDG 8, dealing with sustainable economic growth.

The 2030 Agenda envisages that *'Governments and public institutions will also work closely on implementation with regional and local authorities, sub-regional institutions' and that member states are encouraged 'to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels'*. AOs, including CAPAM, CLGF, CTO and CPA will make a direct contribution to guiding and providing technical support to their members, for example by helping to obtain the necessary information and access to data; identifying and promoting best practice institutional mechanisms, policies and structures; assisting in the creation of the necessary capacity and skills; seeking to marshal/broker financial resources; and assisting with monitoring and reporting processes.

Confronting Climate Change

SDG 13, and the forthcoming CHOGM discussions in Malta and at the COP21 in Paris, provide the context for Commonwealth action on climate change. This is of considerable interest to AOs, particularly the CCM and CLGF. Also of relevance is the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. As recognised under SDG 13, there is a key role for integrating climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning, as well as improving education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning. The CCM plays a key role in this through their individual memberships of the World Meteorological Organisation. All of these are areas where different AOs can play a strategic role in support of their members, especially Commonwealth small states, and in particular small island developing states.

The forthcoming operationalization of the Green Climate Fund could further be an area where interested AOs may be in position to assist their members in accessing the Fund and, on occasions, assisting with the practical implementation of specific projects to address climate change.

Development and Growth of Commonwealth Economies

Furthering economic growth, including through the blue economy, and, in this context also international trade, especially among Commonwealth countries themselves, is a core task of the Intergovernmental Commonwealth and of the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council.

The importance of the digital economy, and its contribution to economic growth, as promoted by the CTO and others, should also be noted. For instance, through their physical distribution networks, members of CCPA are able to provide the fulfilment and delivery capabilities required by the growth of e-commerce; indeed capacity-building in these areas within the Commonwealth was a major theme of CCPA's most recent major conference. These activities will contribute towards SDG 8 on promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and full and productive employment and decent work for all under the 2030 Agenda.

AOs such as CLGF also have a strong interest in supporting these endeavours in line with the Cardiff Consensus on Local Economic Development endorsed by the 2011 CHOGM and the Kampala Declaration on Developmental Local Government endorsed by the 2013 CHOGM; this work aims to encourage investment, tourism and other local economic activities through a business-friendly environment.

Commitment to Commonwealth Values

The AOs are committed to the fundamental Commonwealth values set out in the Commonwealth Charter, notably as they relate to democracy, the rule of law, human rights and good governance. Those AOs which have a direct responsibility for parliament (CPA), local government (CLGF) and the public sector (CAPAM and CATA) will in particular continue to focus their work and business plans on the promotion and implementation of Commonwealth values, underpinned by specific CHOGM policy mandates such as the Aberdeen Principles on Local Democracy and Good Governance.

Recommendations to CHOGM

1. Heads of Government should, in their CHOGM Communique, recognise the Commonwealth family as a whole, entailing the Intergovernmental Commonwealth, the Associated Organisations and Commonwealth Civil Society, as these together provide the full operational capacity of the Commonwealth; and they should request the Commonwealth Secretary-General, in consultation with the Chairperson-in-Office, to ensure a joined-up approach to Commonwealth policy-making, practice and finances in order to fully meet the objective of adding global value.
2. The current practice of separate reporting to and dialogue with Foreign Ministers at CHOGM by the Intergovernmental Commonwealth, by Associated Organisations and by Civil Society should be further enhanced and extended to ensure Heads of Government receive a full report of the activities of all Commonwealth organisations.
3. In accordance with the 2011 CHOGM endorsement of EPG recommendation 87 and subsequent decisions, further collective steps should be taken to ensure close collaboration, partnership and funding of all Commonwealth organisations at a strategic level, in line with their respective competencies and capacities.
4. Heads of Government should actively support the specialised agency work of Commonwealth Associated Organisations in recognition of their distinctive

remit, expertise and know-how, through bilateral/multilateral funding of specific AO programmes and practical measures such as issue of work permits and related privileges to AO technical experts in the field similar to that provided to CFTC experts.

On behalf of the Commonwealth Associated Organisations:

- Gay Hamilton, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer, **Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management**
- Duncan Onduru, Executive Director, **Commonwealth Association of Tax Administrators**
- David Grevemberg, Chief Executive, **Commonwealth Games Federation**
- Carl Wright, Secretary-General, **Commonwealth Local Government Forum**
- Joe Omorodion, Acting Secretary-General, **Commonwealth Parliamentary Association**
- Tim Unwin, Secretary-General, **Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation**
- Jane Wardle, Secretariat, **Conference of Commonwealth Meteorologists**
- David Roberts, Chairman, **Conference of Commonwealth Postal Administrators**

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