



# 9<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting

## Final Communiqué

31<sup>st</sup> July - 4<sup>th</sup> August

### *Resourcing and Financing Youth Development: Empowering Young People*

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#### Preamble

The 9th Commonwealth Youth Ministers' Meeting (9CYMM) was held in Kampala, Uganda, from 31<sup>st</sup> July to 4<sup>th</sup> August 2017. Delegations from 32 countries attended, of which 20 were led by Ministers. The meeting included three parallel forums for (a) Young Leaders, (b) Senior Officials and (c) Stakeholders in Youth Development, which together contributed expert knowledge and diverse perspectives on advancing youth development and exploring effective strategies for financing and resourcing youth development in Commonwealth countries.

His Excellency President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda opened the meeting and welcomed Commonwealth Youth Ministers, delegates and all other stakeholders to Uganda. He highlighted the critical contribution that young people make to national development and emphasised the importance of greater investment in youth development in Commonwealth countries. Commonwealth Secretary General Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC and Ministers thanked the government of Uganda for hosting 9th CYMM. The Secretary General reiterated the Commonwealth's commitment to ensuring that young people are at the heart of all initiatives and efforts aimed at fulfilling the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Ministers shared, discussed and explored strategies to resource and finance youth development. Ministers emphasised the importance of putting young people at the centre of development, and the need for Commonwealth countries to commit greater human and financial resources to ensure the development and empowerment of young people, who comprise nearly one-third of the Commonwealth's population.

#### Overview of the Global Youth Development Landscape

1. Reaffirming the 2015 CHOGM Declaration on the vital role that young people can play in achieving inclusive and sustainable development, Ministers undertook to protect and strengthen the rights of all young people, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
2. Ministers reaffirmed that young people are central to helping the world achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and are ready and willing to do so. Ministers reiterated their commitment to empowering young people as partners and agents of positive change, including prioritising their participation in national development planning and implementation and decision-making processes.
3. Ministers noted the commitment of young people to be agents of social and economic progress continues to be undermined by the wide range of challenges they confront. These include but are not limited to, lack of funding for youth focused and youth led initiatives, and issues such as violent conflicts, natural disasters, poverty, lack of decent work opportunities, climate and

demographic changes, weak youth participation structures, limited access to health and education services.

4. Ministers expressed concern regarding persisting inequalities in levels of youth development within and among Commonwealth countries and within the youth cohort, as shown in the Commonwealth's Global Youth Development Index Report 2016, and resolved to take meaningful and concrete actions to empower and address the specific needs of marginalised young people, such as young people who are poor and live in rural and maritime areas, as well as young women and young people with disabilities.

### **Priority Areas for Investment in Young People**

5. Appreciating that investment in young people's needs and capabilities is a right as reflected in the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment and can yield significant social, economic and political returns, Ministers called for increased and sustained investments in youth development in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) and the 2015 CHOGM and 2013 CYMM communiqués.
6. Recognising that young people in most developing countries continue to lack access to basic social services and decent work opportunities, Ministers resolved to work with other relevant ministries to prioritise investment in post-primary education, productive employment, and skills development and training of young people. They also committed to improving young people's access to health services, especially to address issues related to drug and alcohol abuse as well as mental, physical, sexual and reproductive health.
7. Ministers agreed to lead collaboration on improving young people's meaningful participation in national decision-making institutions and processes through a range of policy measures, such as the establishment and strengthening of youth-led bodies, commonwealth youth networks and innovation hubs.
8. In line with the principle of 'leave no one behind', Ministers recognised the diversity and intersectionality within the youth cohort and agreed that targeted policies and appropriate investment are required to address and advance the distinct needs and interests of various groups such as but not limited to gender, income status, geography, age, education level, people with disability and indigenous and vulnerable communities.
9. Ministers agreed to take steps to invest in gathering data, disaggregated by age, gender, disability and geography. They also agreed to work with National Departments of Statistics and Ministries of Finance to gather data and develop monitoring tools for facilitating the development of evidence-based policies and programmes, and financing strategies for youth development.
10. Ministers endorsed the Youth Development Index as a useful tool for assessing youth development at the national level. Ministers committed to assessing and evaluating youth programmes to ensure effectiveness.

### **Financing and Resourcing of Youth Development**

11. Ministers noted that huge challenges exist in financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and that these challenges are even bigger in the case of financing for youth development. They observed that without major reforms in resource allocation, spending and service delivery, many countries are unlikely to achieve major SDG and AAAA commitments towards children and youth by 2030 In order to bridge this gap, Ministers pledged to redouble

their efforts and follow a multi-stakeholder approach to mobilise adequate financing and resources for youth development at the national and international levels.

12. Ministers agreed to work with relevant ministries to mainstream youth priorities across all stages of policy-making and public spending, and ensure they are integrated with national development and sustainable financing strategies. In this regard, they particularly stressed the need for adopting youth-sensitive budgeting, progressive taxation and youth-friendly public procurement policies.
13. Emphasising the importance of domestic financial resources and the private sector in mobilising investment for youth development, Ministers affirmed the importance of public-private partnerships and innovative financing mechanisms in facilitating youth development. They also endorsed the speedy adoption by Commonwealth countries of the universal social protection floors (SPFs) for all citizens, including young people, as recommended in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
14. Ministers highlighted the need for collaborating with relevant institutions such as Chambers of Commerce to encourage the private sector to align their business goals with national development objectives and the youth development agenda. They agreed to encourage the private sector to take steps to address the skills gap and provide more apprenticeships and decent entry-level jobs for young people.
15. Recognising the importance of innovative financing, Ministers agreed to take steps to ensure the creation and strengthening of an enabling environment for youth-friendly innovative financial instruments, such as youth impact bonds and ethical financial products.
16. Ministers recognised the value of existing financing mechanisms and agreed to lead collaboration to develop policies and strategies to promote youth and social entrepreneurship and financial inclusion, including by improving their access to finance and markets, expanding trade opportunities and making the regulatory environment supportive of young entrepreneurs. They called for Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) - the main employers of young people - to have access to affordable trade finance and support from the banking sector in Commonwealth countries.
17. Ministers invited the Commonwealth Secretariat develop tools and mechanisms that can be used by member states to track domestic and international public spending and financing flows, devoted to the empowerment and advancement of young people.
18. Noting that digital transformation is a driving force of innovative, inclusive and sustainable growth, Ministers agreed to take steps to bridge digital divides along multiple dimensions, including income, age, geography and gender and promote digital literacy and digital skills in all forms of education and learning among young people.
19. Ministers agreed to promote youth work as a profession through education and training for sectors where youth engagement is important, such as but not limited to police, health, youth ministry, and social work. This includes the advancement of the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work, which was launched by President Yoweri Museveni at this meeting.
20. Ministers agreed to establish a Commonwealth Youth Ministerial Task Force (CYMTF) to monitor progress on the CHOGM mandates and other commitments made at Ministerial meetings which refer to youth development, and provide advice and strategic direction in implementing them. The Terms of Reference for CYMTF are attached as an annex.

## Commonwealth Youth Programme

21. Ministers noted the Commonwealth Youth Programme report presented to the Meeting, and commended the CYP for:
  - a. Producing insightful and useful thought leadership pieces such as the Global Youth Development Index and Report 2016, Youth Mainstreaming in Development Planning: Transforming Young Lives and the Youth Work Baseline Study;
  - b. Creating the new Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work Education;
22. Ministers commended the role and work of the Commonwealth Alliance of Youth Worker Associations (CAYWA), and youth-led networks such as the Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC), and the Commonwealth Youth Peace Ambassadors Network (CYPAN).
23. Ministers invited the Commonwealth Secretariat to consider how to increase visibility of the Commonwealth youth networks and create better linkages between the youth networks, national youth structures and member states. The Ministers also invited the Commonwealth Youth Programme to engage more closely with youth ministries in member states on the projects and programmes of youth networks.
24. Ministers noted the CYP requires additional resources to fulfil the potential of its value and support to member governments and resolved to recommend additional support to Heads of Governments at CHOGM 2018. They noted the importance of appointing regional representatives at the management level to facilitate improved relationship and better communication between member countries and the Secretariat and invited the Secretary General to make recommendations.
25. Ministers particularly emphasised the importance of continued focus by CYP in the areas of:
  - a. Supporting member governments in the development of evidence-based youth policies and youth development initiatives through the production and dissemination of thought leadership pieces such as policy guides, reports and toolkits.
  - b. Providing technical assistance and capacity building to member governments to help them develop and strengthen policies, strategies and action plans for empowering young people;
  - c. Promoting policy-relevant knowledge sharing and capacity-building partnerships between Commonwealth governments, multilateral organisations, the private sector and other stakeholders;
  - d. Once proper accountability mechanisms for youth networks are in place, CYP can continue to enhance youth participation in decision-making and youth-led action through providing support and technical assistance to the eight thematic Commonwealth youth networks on peace, climate change, health, human rights etc.
26. Ministers resolved to recommend to the Secretary General and Heads Of Governments:
  - a. National development plans and policies of governments should include clearly defined and appropriate commitments for investment in youth;
  - b. More consideration be given to increasing governments' investment in young people's needs, including increased budgetary and non-budgetary allocations to Youth Ministries and exploring innovative financing mechanisms;
  - c. Governments prioritise the collection of relevant youth-specific data to inform investment and policy-making in youth development, including through mandatory gathering of age and gender-disaggregated data in the national census;
  - d. Governments take steps to optimise the regulatory framework and enabling environment for businesses and encourage them to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies and practices for the empowerment of young people.

- e. Using a South-South cooperation model, governments must harness and leverage of the Commonwealth to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, best practices and technical assistance related to youth development among member countries.
- f. Governments ensure that new and existing international financing pools, such as those related to climate, humanitarian and disaster risk reduction, are made accessible to and impactful for young people, and that youth is mainstreamed throughout all funded projects;
- g. Governments make efforts to make global trade, financial and investment agreements conducive to the promotion of youth development and empowerment through impact assessments, as well as targeted incentives and investments, capacity building and participation of young people in global supply chains and local content provisions;
- h. That the Commonwealth Secretariat and the CYP be empowered and appropriately funded to support the capacity development of member governments through the provision of technical assistance, policy guidance, toolkits and data analysis.

## **Commitments**

Ministers committed themselves to ongoing and new programmes and exploring new mechanisms of financing and resourcing youth development and the creation of an innovation hub within the Commonwealth Secretariat, which will lead to the empowerment of young people in their countries.

## **Next Meeting**

Ministers expressed appreciation to the Government of Uganda for its hospitality and for hosting 9CYMM in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat. They welcomed the offer of the Government of Jamaica to host 10CYMM in 2021.