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## Communiqué

Asia Region Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting  
28-30 July 2015 | New Delhi, India

*‘Youth Participation at the heart of sustainable development’*

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1. The Asia Region Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting (AsR-CYMM) was held in New Delhi, India on 28-30 July 2015. The meeting was officially opened by Hon Sarbananda Sonowal, Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India.
2. Delegates to the meeting expressed their sincere condolences to the Government and people of India on the passing away of Dr A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, former President of India.
3. All eight member countries from the Commonwealth Asia region attended the AsR-CYMM, of which five were led at the Ministerial level. Delegates included Ministers, senior government officials and youth representatives, as well as youth development stakeholders and experts.
4. The timing of the AsR-CYMM, occurring just two months before world leaders finalise the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2015-2030 at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), gave delegates the opportunity to deliberate national youth development priorities in that context.
5. In recognition of the important contribution of young people as partners in regional and national development, delegates considered recommendations submitted by the Youth Leaders Forum of the AsR-CYMM, particularly on decent employment, entrepreneurship and skills development, professionalising youth work, peace building, strengthening national youth participation structures, and developing and implementing National Youth Policies.

### Young People in National and Global Development Agendas

5. Youth ministers agreed strategies/key actions to ensure youth empowerment and development priorities are included in national and regional development frameworks, especially in light of the new SDGs.
6. Ministers reinforced their commitment to the resolutions agreed at 8CYMM in 2013, and resolved to take further practical action, especially in the area of youth policy design and implementation, strengthening youth participation mechanisms, and youth employment and skills development and entrepreneurship.

7. Ministers agreed to champion a youth focus in their countries in programming and interventions at national and regional level to achieve the goals of the SDG targets and indicators.
8. Ministers also supported the call by youth leaders for a youth-focused monitoring mechanism for the SDGs, including the disaggregation of data, and analysis using the Commonwealth Youth Development Index.
9. Ministers agreed to advocate for adequate financing for youth development at sub-national, national and regional levels.

## **Youth Employment, Skills Development and Entrepreneurship**

10. Ministers reiterated that economic empowerment and entrepreneurship are critical for growth and as a solution to unemployment.
11. Ministers commended the progress made by the Commonwealth Alliance of Young Entrepreneurs - Asia (CAYE-A), and agreed to provide further support, noting that such a network helps lift economic growth and youth employment in member countries. Ministers further agreed to continue to strengthen and support youth entrepreneurship by facilitating easier access to technology and finance for young people, particularly those unable to furnish collateral, and simplifying the regulatory environment for youth.
12. Ministers noted the emergence of a *Policy Guide on Youth Entrepreneurship*, developed by the Commonwealth Secretariat in partnership with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and committed to develop, and where necessary refine, national/regional youth entrepreneurship strategies in collaboration with the Commonwealth and other regional partners, including the CAYE-Asia.
13. Ministers resolved to work with the Commonwealth and other development partners to ensure entrepreneurial and employment opportunities for young people in new and emerging economies.
14. Ministers agreed to strengthen skills training education relevant to the existing and future needs of labour markets, including partnerships with industry, and utilisation of existing education and training infrastructures, to enhance employability of young people and economic development.
15. Ministers noted the introduction of World Youth Skills Day and its take up in member countries.
16. Ministers agreed to facilitate the formation of a virtual regional network between ministries to identify and share good practices in skills development and entrepreneurship programming with the support of the Commonwealth.
17. Ministers noted that life skills are just as important as technical skills, in particular in the context of preparing for an unknown economic future. They

also noted the importance of identifying different but equally valuable educational pathways to meet young people's diverse needs and aspirations.

## **Youth Participation in Governance**

18. Ministers committed to enhancing youth participation in decision-making, as well as youth participation in the design, implementation and monitoring of government programmes, by taking steps to include targets for youth representation, through legitimate structures, in relevant governance and decision-making structures at national, regional and international levels.
19. Ministers agreed to establish/strengthen national youth councils (NYCs) or other national youth-led bodies in their countries, acknowledging the potential role and contribution of NYCs to sustainable development, peace and democracy. Ministers requested the Commonwealth's assistance in developing guidance on principles and structures of successful youth council models.
20. Ministers commended the progress of the Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC) and Commonwealth Students' Association (CSA) in engaging and uniting youth and student organisations in the Commonwealth. They also noted the need to strengthen communication and coordination mechanisms between youth networks, youth ministries and the Commonwealth.
21. Ministers noted the resource constraints faced by youth-led and youth-serving organisations, especially National Youth Councils and student associations, and agreed to provide greater support for building their capacity through legislation, financial assistance and/or other measures.
22. Ministers recognised the importance of participation by representative youth leaders at key regional and international meetings such as the upcoming Commonwealth Youth Forum and 2<sup>nd</sup> CYC General Assembly as part of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Malta in November 21-25 2015, and agreed to encourage and support them to attend and contribute to shaping policy through an inclusive and transparent process.
23. Ministers commended the participating youth leaders on the relevance of their inputs to the AsR-CYMM, noting that it is critical for young people to be involved in development policies, strategies and implementation to ensure sustainability and relevance to young people.
24. Youth delegates expressed their deep appreciation for the financial and in-kind contributions from the Governments of Pakistan and Sri Lanka in support of the Commonwealth Youth Council.

## **National Youth Policy Frameworks and Action Plans**

25. Ministers shared national experiences of the processes, challenges and opportunities for the design and implementation of national youth policies, and ensuring that national youth policies are inclusive of, and relevant to, young people's needs and capabilities. Ministers commended the work presented by a

number of countries on evidence-based, youth-inclusive, comprehensive processes followed for National Youth Policy reviews. Ministers agreed to work together to strengthen national youth policy frameworks and action plans across the region, and to prioritise action and resources to ensure meaningful implementation.

26. Ministers noted the challenges of an increasingly complex environment of regional and global youth policy frameworks, and the expiry of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (2007-2015). Ministers endorsed the Commonwealth's proposal to harmonise the multiple policy frameworks, as part of a broader Commonwealth youth policy environment, and agreed to collaborate in the process.
27. Ministers committed to advocate for adequate resourcing and prioritisation for youth development across all relevant ministries, to ensure they are able to execute their vital mandates, in alignment with best practice, approved national policy and legislative frameworks. Ministers also acknowledged the importance of having competent young people working within ministries to provide youth perspectives on policy and programme design, and contribute to implementation.
28. Ministers agreed that policy documents must be developed through a multi-sectoral development process to ensure that wide relevance and ownership, and transcend political regimes. Further, policy and programmes must be cohesive and evidence based, and should be supported by mandatory monitoring and evaluative components. Ministers agreed that data is critical to the design and monitoring of policies and programming, and should be validated, regularly updated, and shared.
29. Ministers acknowledged the importance of a mainstreaming approach to youth policy design and implementation and agreed to incorporate youth mainstreaming principles and strategies in national youth policy processes. Ministers resolved to strengthen efforts to implement, monitor and evaluate youth policies, to track progress in youth development with the help of regular reporting and tools such as the Commonwealth Youth Development Index, and to aim for a review of National Youth Policies every five years.
30. Ministers noted the importance of recognising emerging topics in youth policies, such as the increasing agency of young people to address their own issues, and the advent of social media, which has the potential to be a force for liberty and socialisation if used positively, but conversely a threat if used for activities such as cyberbullying.

## **Professionalising Youth Work**

31. Ministers reinforced their commitment to youth work as an essential component of the enabling environment that underpins effective youth development. Ministers also committed to continue implementing the mandate by the Commonwealth Heads of Government to enhance the competencies and professionalism of youth work and the recognition of youth work in youth policy, and where possible, in legislation.

32. Ministers reconfirmed the importance of education and training for youth workers and agreed to facilitate and support youth work education across the Commonwealth, including engagement with the emerging Commonwealth Consortium for a bachelor's degree in youth development work, and the 2016 Commonwealth Youth Work Conference. They further noted that the Commonwealth Competency Standards for Youth Development Work should act as a guide for the capacity building and evaluation of youth workers.
33. Ministers agreed to collaborate on the celebration of Commonwealth Youth Work Week and encourage applications for the annual Commonwealth Youth Worker awards.
34. Ministers commended the work of the Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD) in India, and agreed to explore the possibilities for establishing or strengthening youth development focused institutions and think tanks in their own countries to provide an academic core for youth development research and practice.
35. Ministers discussed the issue of setting up systematic field mechanisms for the empowerment, non-formal education and care of young people, and agreed to work towards the identification and implementation of good models of youth work practice such as that outlined in the Commonwealth's *Co-Creating Youth Spaces* model.
36. Ministers commended the contributions of the regional finalists of the Commonwealth Youth Worker Awards, in particular the challenges that they and other youth workers in the region face, and agreed to better support the contribution of youth work professionals.

## Youth and Peaceful Societies

37. Ministers reflected on the promotion of peace, harmony and social cohesion, as a counter to conflict and extremism, and a force for social and economic development.
38. Ministers committed to taking a collective, regional approach to peace building, and resolution of conflicts and disputes, noting that young people and youth ministers can play a leadership role in promoting friendship, understanding and unity, in the Asia region and as a global exemplar.
39. Ministers endorsed the principles outlined in the *Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peace-building* and committed to using the principles where relevant to guide programme design and delivery in dealing with crime and violence.
40. Ministers reiterated the importance of social values and values based education. They also agreed to explore mechanisms for engagement between young people of diverse backgrounds, and inter-generational and intercultural dialogue and understanding.

## Commonwealth Engagement

41. Ministers commended the contribution of the Commonwealth to furthering youth development policy and practice in the Asia Region, and agreed that there is a strong need for continued technical support after the implementation of the new operating model for the Commonwealth Youth Programme.

## Closing

42. Ministers requested the Commonwealth Secretariat to assist and follow up on the implementation of the resolutions contained in this communique on an annual basis.

43. Youth delegates expressed their appreciation to the Ministers of the Commonwealth Asia Region for their participatory approach and genuine partnership, and noted that they look forward to a continuation of this inclusive and mutually beneficial relationship and the implementation of the agreements made.

44. Ministers expressed their appreciation to the Government and the people of India for their hospitality in hosting the AsR-CYMM, and the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Youth Council for organising the event, and commended the interactive and productive format.

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