



The Commonwealth

12th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (12WAMM)

**From Commitment to Action: Accelerating Gender Equality and Women's
Empowerment for Sustainable Development**

Nairobi, Kenya, 19 - 20 September 2019

12WAMM OUTCOMES DOCUMENT

Commonwealth Secretariat
Nairobi
20 September 2019

The 12th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (12WAMM) was held in Nairobi, Kenya, 19-20 September 2019. Delegations from 26 member countries attended the meeting.

The opening ceremony was addressed by the President of Kenya, His Excellency Uhuru Kenyatta, represented by Ambassador Dr Amina Mohamed, Cabinet Secretary for Sports, Culture and Heritage of Kenya. The meeting was chaired by Dr Margaret Kobia, Cabinet Secretary for the Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs of Kenya.

The theme of the meeting was "From Commitment to Action: Accelerating Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment for Sustainable Development".

12WAMM took place in less than a year before the global community will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995). The 12WAMM recognised that in 2020, it would be the five-year milestone towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 20th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, and four years since the Commonwealth Ministers committed to four priorities for gender equality. Therefore 2020 is a pivotal year for the accelerated realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, leaving no one behind.

In pursuance of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and regional mandates, Ministers reiterated that accelerating actions for realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is critical and will make an essential contribution to progress across all the 17 SDGs and 169 targets. They also noted the importance of systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is crucial.

2. Ministers welcomed the **Report from Senior Officials** and noted the recommendations in the **report of the Roundtable of Civil Society** and of those from the side event on 'Levelling the Law' strategy, focusing on the repeal of discriminatory laws as part of a broader legal reform agenda in support of gender equality.

3. Ministers welcomed the integration and implementation of the outcome of the second Commonwealth Women's Forum held in London in April 2018 and the National Women's Machineries in the implementation of commitments on the Commonwealth's four priorities on gender equality.

4. Ministers noted the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Communiqué, reaffirming that **gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls** should be mainstreamed into planning and development, and reaffirmed their commitment to prioritising the issue in line with the 2030 Agenda and within the work of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

5. Ministers reviewed the progress of the agreed four priority areas on gender equality and agreed to endorse the focus to remain on these four areas for the next five years.

- (i) Women's economic empowerment;
- (ii) Women in leadership;
- (iii) Ending violence against women and girls; and
- (iv) Gender and climate change.

6. Ministers acknowledged the importance of accurate, timely, disaggregated data and information, as well as clear targets and timelines, to underpin evidence based policy implementation and evaluation.

7. Ministers recognised the empowerment of women and girls and the improvement of their political, social, economic and health status as highly important for the delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and aligned to the *Commonwealth Charter* which recognizes that gender equality and women's empowerment are essential components of human development and fundamental human rights. In this light, Ministers recalled the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) Communique and committed to ratifying and implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and for all Commonwealth members to step up implementation of CEDAW through legislation, policies and programmes that mainstream and promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in social, economic and political life.

8. Ministers agreed to:

(a) Continue to openly share knowledge of what has been effective to accelerate gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in their countries to;

- i. Strengthen women's access to public and political sectors at all levels of decision making;
- ii. Reinforce women's economic empowerment by, *inter alia* increasing women's financial inclusion, access to paid parental leave provisions, affordable childcare, equal pay for work of equal value, and the ability of women to access, own and control land, businesses and other physical capital. Strengthen women and girls' access to quality education for lifelong learning. Strengthen women and girls access to quality healthcare and nutrition.
- iii. Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, including child, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting, human trafficking, and support women and girls who have been affected, and partner with community leaders to address social and cultural norms that hinder progress; and
- iv. Encourage and promote equal participation and leadership roles for women in developing and implementing international and national action plans for climate change and disasters, and raise awareness through national and international campaigns on the gendered impact of climate change.

(b) Work together at the 64th Session of the UN Commission for the Status of Women in March 2020 to encourage global leaders to accelerate action for gender equality and women's empowerment;

(c) Support their Heads of Government to account and report to CHOGM 2020 about the progress they have made in implementing the agreed actions of the 12 WAMM; and

(d) Recommend that CHOGM 2020 adopt a Declaration on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2020-2030, based on the draft declaration as agreed by Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers.

9. Ministers agreed to commit to progressing and harnessing the demographic dividend in line with existing commitments in terms of the SDGs, CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, and the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and outcomes of their regional reviews, particularly as it pertains to young women and girls; and to recommend to the CHOGM to endorse the Commonwealth Secretariat to continue to support the efforts of Commonwealth member states to progress their commitments to SRHR, as a crucial component of realising human rights.

10. Ministers asked the Commonwealth Secretariat to consider establishing a Women's Ministers Action Group to advance collective action to promote gender equality in the Commonwealth.

11. On presentation and discussion of the paper *WAMM(19)2c - Accelerating Gender Equality by Gender Mainstreaming*, Ministers agreed that:

- a) Chairs of Commonwealth Ministers meetings and the Secretariat commit to
- Including specific gender items for discussion in their agendas and integrating gender perspectives into all agenda items
 - Creating an agenda with gender-balanced speakers
 - When commissioning background papers, ensuring gender analysis and data disaggregated by gender is included where appropriate
 - Encouraging member countries to bring gender-balanced delegations
 - Seeking advice and support from gender experts and the gender section of the Commonwealth Secretariat in the initial phases of planning for future meetings
 - Encouraging the Commonwealth Secretariat to provide gender mainstream training and tools for officials who provide support for Ministers meetings
- b) Ministers agreed to call on:
- Creating gender-balanced delegations, including providing opportunities for emerging women leaders to participate
 - Commissioning, from their officials, gender analysis of agenda issues so that they can actively contribute gender-based information and insights to the full range of agenda items

12. On presentation and discussion of the paper *WAMM(19)4a - Gender Equality in the Commonwealth 2018/19*, Ministers noted that as part of the continuing efforts to monitor progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women, in pursuit of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, they:

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- a) Emphasised the importance of accurate and regular national data collection on gender inequality, to underpin evidence based policy making;
- b) Noted that important progress has been made by member countries on a range of important development indicators for gender equality;
- c) Acknowledged that progress on gender equality and women's empowerment has been positive at various levels; however, strengthened efforts are needed to mainstream gender in all aspects of decision making and budgeting as countries progress towards 2030;
- d) Recalled that at 11WAMM member countries agreed to share national progress reports with other development partners including the Commonwealth and the UN, to support tracking progress; and to honour this commitment by voluntarily sharing reports with the Commonwealth Secretariat; and
- e) Called on Heads of Government to prioritise gender responsive budgeting frameworks across the whole of government.

13. Ministers thanked the Commonwealth Secretariat for its support for the 12th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers' Meeting.

14. Ministers thanked the Government of Kenya for successfully hosting the 12th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers' Meeting.

15. Ministers welcomed and acknowledged The Bahamas' expression of interest to host the next Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers' Meeting in 2022.

20 September 2019
Nairobi, Kenya