

# 11<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Youth Forum Declaration:

## “Powering Our Common Future”



The Commonwealth





## **Eleventh Commonwealth Youth Forum, London, 15-18 April 2018**

### **Declaration by the Young People of the Commonwealth**

“Powering Our Common Future’ is the young people’s response to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting theme ‘Towards a Common Future’, reaffirming the powerful potential of young people across the Commonwealth in devising solutions for a more prosperous, secure, sustainable and fairer future.”

#### **Preamble**

1. This declaration and supporting action plan (Annex 1) express current policy recommendations of young people from the Commonwealth. These are needed to collectively move towards a common future, and specifically: a more prosperous future; a more secure future; a more sustainable future; and a fairer future. These recommendations have been gathered through regional Commonwealth and global youth forums, and were finalised at the 11th Commonwealth Youth Forum. They represent a common framework to inform and inspire youth-led development at national, regional and Commonwealth levels.
2. We, the young people of the Commonwealth, convened in London from 15 – 18 April 2018 for the 11th Commonwealth Youth Forum, recommit to the values and principles enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter and the Commonwealth Youth Council Constitution. In this year, when the Commonwealth family is focused on the role and contribution of young people through the Commonwealth theme, ‘*Towards a Common Future*,’ we support the declaration of Heads enshrined in Article XIII of the Commonwealth Charter that recognises the critical role of young people in the future success of the Commonwealth.<sup>1</sup>
3. As youth leaders, we pledge our ongoing commitment and support as partners and stakeholders in our own countries and the Commonwealth as we all strive towards building a more prosperous future, a more secure future, a more sustainable future and a fairer future, as defined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the accompanying Sustainable Development Goals.

By this Youth Declaration, we:

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<sup>1</sup> Commonwealth Charter, Article 13: Importance of Young People in the Commonwealth (2013)



4. *Recognise* that to successfully transform our world, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must be adopted and actualised by all governments and stakeholders, therein prioritising national and international policies that implement, monitor and achieve the entire agenda, including the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>2</sup>
5. *Acknowledge* the importance of young people's inclusive participation and positive contribution to building peace, culminating with the United Nations Security Council passing Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security and other accompanying guidelines for youth-led action on peacebuilding.<sup>3</sup> Resolution 2250 represents a milestone of meaningful empowerment of young people in all social, political and economic processes to formulate sustainable solutions to critical security threats of the 21st century.
6. *Recall and commit to:* the African Youth Charter (AYC); the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Youth Development Action Plan; the Pacific Youth Development Framework (PYDF); and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Declaration on the Adoption of the ASEAN Youth Development Index, along with the policy recommendations put forward by young people participating in the 2017 Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meetings.
7. *Acknowledge* the vital role and contribution of formal and informal national youth councils/bodies, national student organisations, youth organisations, youth movements, associations, networks and other youth-led entities, in helping to build a safer, more stable, secure and productive society for young people. We also recognise the continued support of youth workers and the youth sector as a whole, together with Ministries/departments of youth and other stakeholders in furthering youth development.
8. We therefore call on governments, civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international donor partners, major groups and other stakeholders active in member states to partner with the Commonwealth Youth Council to support the following policy recommendations:

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth Sector Paper: High Level Political Forum 2017 (2017)

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015); A Guide to UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015)



## **POWERING OUR COMMON FUTURE**

### **I) A More Prosperous Future**

9. We, the young people of the Commonwealth, acknowledge the importance of the Commonwealth's inclusive and equitable development agenda, with particular emphasis on people-centred and planet sensitive development. In order to build a more prosperous future, we recognise the urgent need to tackle youth unemployment and underemployment; enhance education and skills building for effective youth mobility and engagement in labour markets; promote sustainable livelihoods, economic diversification and development; establish youth friendly entrepreneurship ecosystems; and harness context-sensitive and appropriate technology and innovation to drive the renewal of the Commonwealth. Moreover, the sufficient resourcing and financing of the youth development sector and youth mainstreaming remains, to young people, an essential component of youth-centric national development for holistic outcomes for an age-inclusive prosperous Commonwealth.

### **Tackling Youth Unemployment**

The young people of the Commonwealth call on:

10. National governments to support the collection of quality disaggregated unemployment data and standardising of indicators related to youth unemployment, through using tools such as the Youth Development Index to inform, track and measure the progress of employment initiatives.<sup>4</sup>
11. All member states to prioritise the advancement of education, skills development, mobility and access to markets, youth participation and young people's access to rights, enabling young people to attain sustainable livelihoods for many generations to come.<sup>5</sup>
12. National governments to provide appropriate resources for higher education institutions to further strengthen joint research, capacity building, professional development and mobility of students, faculty and staff.<sup>6</sup>
13. All member states to explore and address issues around higher education skills and employment, by drawing on insights from students, representatives from higher education institutions and the private sector. This should involve identifying and cultivating the critical

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<sup>4</sup> Pacific Region Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting: Youth Leaders Forum Communiqué (2015)

<sup>5</sup> The Abidjan Declaration: 4th Africa-Europe Youth Summit (2017)

<sup>6</sup> 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers: Nadi Declaration (2018)



skills required by students to both create and respond to new economic opportunities and further expanding Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and life-long learning, therefore ensuring equitable access for all in adapting to the future requirements of work.<sup>7</sup>

14. National governments to create and incorporate a framework for the recognition and validation of competences gained through non-formal education, including that provided through youth organisations, to ensure life-long learning and skills development.<sup>8</sup>
15. All member states and development partners to invest in partnerships with young people, directing funding and capacity building towards young people's initiatives in the youth employment and enterprise sector, thus harnessing the assets and skills of youth in addressing the challenges that they face, unleashing young people's agency.<sup>9</sup>

### **Promotion of Youth Entrepreneurship and Innovation**

The young people of the Commonwealth call on:

16. National governments to help young entrepreneurs to transform their ideas into viable, sustainable businesses by providing capacity building and training on business development, access to markets, use of technology and innovation, alongside addressing barriers that restrict young people from starting or expanding their businesses.<sup>10</sup>
17. National governments to facilitate programmes that enhance sustainable access to finance, ensuring that young people from all backgrounds are enabled to access enterprise funding.<sup>11</sup> This should include the development and implementation of 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.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers Integrated Partners' Forum Outcome Statement (2018)

<sup>8</sup> The Abidjan Declaration: 4th Africa-Europe Youth Summit (2017)

<sup>9</sup> Restless Development and S4YE: Strategy for Youth Participation in the Solutions for Youth Employment Coalition (2017)

<sup>10</sup> African Union BANJUL +10 Outcome Document (2016)

<sup>11</sup> The Abidjan Declaration: 4th Africa-Europe Youth Summit (2017)

<sup>12</sup> 9th CYMM Youth Leaders Forum: Declaration (2017)



18. National governments to lay the groundwork for innovation by investing in information and communication technology infrastructure and community innovation hubs, facilitating dialogue, training and internet access, particularly for those in rural and remote areas.<sup>13</sup>
19. National governments to support youth entrepreneurship by including entrepreneurship education as part of the curriculum in schools and universities.<sup>14</sup>

### **Resourcing and Financing Youth Development: Leaving No One Behind**

The young people of the Commonwealth call on:

20. National governments to invest in the youth sector within their country by adequately resourcing and financing Youth Ministries, thus prioritising the implementation and revision of youth policies, programmes, projects and activities pertaining to youth and social development.<sup>15</sup> National governments should also support youth work associations, youth workers and volunteers to build the necessary skill sets, thus building the capabilities of those who are working with youth and providing a holistic approach to youth development.
21. National governments to assess and consider the viability of establishing a Commonwealth Youth Development Bank to facilitate youth access to finance, especially business credits and loans and capital.<sup>16</sup>
22. National governments to invest in the collection of data on young people, disaggregated by age, sex, gender, race, disability and geography; and to develop monitoring and evaluation tools to facilitate the development of evidence-based policies and programmes.<sup>17</sup>
23. All member states to acknowledge the contribution of non-formal and informal learning in building the resilience of young people and the role of youth and community workers in delivering non-formal and informal education.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Final 9<sup>th</sup> CYMM-Youth-Leaders 2017 Resolutions (2017)

<sup>14</sup> Youth Declaration and Plan of Action for Youth Development in the Caribbean Region and Canada: Caribbean Region Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting (2015)

<sup>15</sup> Final 9<sup>th</sup> CYMM-Youth-Leaders 2017 Resolutions (2017)

<sup>16</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> CYMM Youth Leaders Forum: Declaration (2017) – Policy Recommendations and Voluntary Commitments Youth Development and Youth-led Action

<sup>17</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> CYMM Youth Leaders Forum: Declaration (2017)

<sup>18</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers: Nadi Declaration (2018); 20<sup>th</sup> Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers Integrated Partners' Forum Outcome Statement (2018)



24. All member states to enhance young people's access to capital by formulating and implementing strategies to increase financial literacy and inclusion, thereby prioritising young people's economic empowerment.<sup>19</sup>

### **Mainstreaming Youth Priorities in National Development Planning**

The young people of the Commonwealth call on:

25. National governments to implement a cross-sectoral and participatory approach to youth policy, ensuring structures for effective coordination and mainstreaming of youth in all policies, and creation of, or support to, existing mechanisms that guarantee extended and improved youth participation in policy-making processes.<sup>20</sup>
26. All member states to re-emphasize the significance of youth mainstreaming in facilitating holistic development planning and in resourcing and financing of young people's development with a strong accountability and monitoring framework.<sup>21</sup>

### **II) A More Secure Future**

27. We, the young people of the Commonwealth, acknowledge that the contemporary challenges of terrorism, organised crime, cyber-crime, violent extremism, environmental and human insecurity and human trafficking present a range of obstacles on our collective journey towards a secure future. The important role young people can play in addressing these challenges, with particular regard to promoting peaceful and cohesive societies and countering/preventing violent extremism, should not be underestimated. We, therefore, intend to contribute pertinent solutions to these challenges. We highlight the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security as the impetus for the meaningful engagement of young people in all social, political and economic processes undertaken to mitigate the security threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In addition, we highlight the Security Council debate concerning the impact of climate change on peace and security. In tackling such threats, an array of mutually supportive policy frameworks and empowerment programmes, which support the creation and flourishing of an enabling environment, will be needed to address the root causes of violent extremism, human and environmental

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<sup>19</sup> Pacific Region Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting: Youth Leaders Forum Communiqué (2015)

<sup>20</sup> The Abidjan Declaration: 4th Africa-Europe Youth Summit (2017)

<sup>21</sup> Youth Mainstreaming in Development Planning: Transforming Young Lives – Commonwealth Secretariat (2017)





insecurity, and to promote social cohesion, mutual respect, tolerance and understanding within our societies.

### **Resolution 2250 – Youth, Peace and Security**

The young people of the Commonwealth call on:

28. All member states to ensure youth inclusion and participation in the national level implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security, allocating the necessary financial and human resources to develop and implement long-term national action plans which draw on the inputs from young people, especially through the progress study of the resolution.<sup>22</sup>
29. National and local governments to empower and support youth to be actively involved in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding processes and initiatives; while also supporting youth-led organisations in their efforts to promote social cohesion, security, stability, respect and understanding.<sup>23</sup>

### **Countering/Preventing Violent Extremism**

The young people of the Commonwealth call on:

30. All member states to support the participatory development and implementation of national strategies by the relevant institutions, civil society and youth at local and national level, to tackle racism and discrimination in all its forms, including that based on gender, ethnicity, religion, culture and geographical location.<sup>24</sup>
31. All member states to stem the rising tide of violent extremism by promoting the social, political and economic empowerment of young people to address the push and pull factors that lead to violent extremism.<sup>25</sup> Member states should work with young people to combat the global threat from extremist ideologies, by shifting the narrative to prevent radicalization and placing emphasis on the benefits of inclusion.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015); The Abidjan Declaration: 4th Africa-Europe Youth Summit (2017)

<sup>23</sup> Africa Region Commonwealth Youth Leaders' Forum: Final Statement (2015)

<sup>24</sup> The Abidjan Declaration: 4th Africa-Europe Youth Summit (2017)

<sup>25</sup> African Union BANJUL +10 Outcome Document (2016); The Abidjan Declaration: 4th Africa-Europe Youth Summit (2017)

<sup>26</sup> One Young World 2017: Summit Highlights (2017)





## **Cyber Security**

The young people of the Commonwealth call on:

32. National governments to recognise and respond to the increasing number and severity of online security threats facing citizens of the Commonwealth, including young people; and to provide more opportunities for digital literacy education to ensure that youth have the skills, knowledge and resources to protect themselves online.<sup>27</sup>

## **Global Citizenship, Inter-faith and Inter-Cultural Understanding**

The young people of the Commonwealth call on:

33. National governments to recognise and promote civic education and engagement of young people through formal and non-formal education systems, while also facilitating intergenerational dialogue, inter-faith and inter-cultural understanding in communities.<sup>28</sup>
34. All member states to recognise Sports for Development and Peace as a proven strategy to contribute to the SDGs and to develop skills for youth contribution and meaningful participation.<sup>29</sup>
35. All member states to support young people through our National Youth Councils and youth-led organisations to promote peace-building programmes such as: sports for peace and development; and other youth-led initiatives on security, stability, nation building, patriotism, social cohesion and respect and understanding.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> The Abidjan Declaration: 4th Africa-Europe Youth Summit (2017); 9th CYMM Youth Leaders Forum Resolutions (2017)

<sup>28</sup> Youth Declaration for Youth Engagement in the Asia Region: Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting (2015); The Abidjan Declaration: 4th Africa-Europe Youth Summit (2017)

<sup>29</sup> Pacific Region Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting: Youth Leaders Forum Communiqué (2015)

<sup>30</sup> Africa Region Commonwealth Youth Leaders' Forum: Final Statement (2015)



### **III) A More Sustainable Future**

36. We, the young people of the Commonwealth, recognise that the majority of countries most endangered by the effects of climate change are located within the Commonwealth. In order to achieve a more sustainable future for all and particularly the most vulnerable Commonwealth countries, we call for unified and comprehensive action to stay within planetary boundaries, reduce vulnerabilities and strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards. Key action areas that are central to realising a sustainable future, include: mechanisms for the development of clean and efficient energy solutions; protection of marine and coastal ecosystems; initiatives to promote the conservation and restoration of biodiversity, terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems; and sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.

#### **Youth Leadership and Participation in Climate Change Policy**

The young people of the Commonwealth call on:

37. National Governments to promote youth engagement in climate negotiations and to transition to a sustainable future through<sup>31</sup>:
- Engaging young people in the Paris Agreement implementation process at national levels and further upholding the principle of intergenerational equity, climate justice, action for climate empowerment, the right to development and survival, education and training, empowerment of women, public access to information, public participation and public awareness.
  - Financing the inclusion of youth in official governmental delegations to climate change negotiation processes including the UNFCCC, IPCC, UNCCD, UNCBD, and other MEA's related to climate change policies.
  - Enhancing the focus on the training of environmental youth groups to scale up their capacity to influence national and regional processes, resulting in bottom-up inputs to climate governance.
  - Engaging youth in political leadership as key partners in engaging Parliament and leveraging support for the increased ambition to climate action.
  - Investing in the training of a cadre of young climate scientists to mainstream youth priorities, with a particular focus on the disaggregation of findings and research on climate change across the Commonwealth and especially SIDS; by age, gender and

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<sup>31</sup> Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network Declaration at the UNFCCC COP22 Paris Climate Negotiations (2016); United Nations: Paris Agreement (2015); Pacific Small Island Developing States Youth Leaders' Outcome Document (2014)



geographical location, within the IPCC and other climate processes including the Commonwealth's Blue Charter Initiative.

38. National governments to actively engage young people in national climate change management strategies and policy formulation, including the allocation of resources, capacity building, and support for effective climate advocacy, communications and campaigning.<sup>32</sup>

### **Innovation and Livelihoods in the Blue and Green Economies**

The young people of the Commonwealth call on:

39. National governments to advocate for the creation of green jobs for youth and to facilitate a transition into green and blue economies through the growth of holistic ecosystems.<sup>33</sup>
40. All member states to facilitate the implementation of sustainable agricultural programmes that promote technology transfer, sharing of good practices and provide subsidy programmes to promote organic farming, especially among young people, moving towards more environmentally friendly economies.<sup>34</sup>

### **Vulnerability and Climate Resilience**

The young people of the Commonwealth call on:

41. National Governments to enhance adaptation, mitigation and climate resilience through equipping youth with the skills, tools and knowledge they require to engage with disaster preparedness, response and recovery.<sup>35</sup>
42. The Commonwealth Secretariat to develop a further elaboration of the Global Youth Development Index to inform the creation of a Youth Vulnerability Index on Climate Change and Disasters, which can be a mapping tool highlighting the existing and various impacts of

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<sup>32</sup> Pacific Region Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting: Youth Leaders Forum Communiqué (2015); Pacific Small Island Developing States Youth Leaders' Outcome Document (2014)

<sup>33</sup> Youth Declaration for Youth Engagement in the Asia Region: Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting (2015); Pacific Small Island Developing States Youth Leaders' Outcome Document (2014); Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network Declaration at the UNFCCC COP22 Paris Climate Negotiations (2016)

<sup>34</sup> The Abidjan Declaration: 4th Africa-Europe Youth Summit (2017)

<sup>35</sup> Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network Declaration at the UNFCCC COP22 Paris Climate Negotiations (2016)



climate change and related disasters on children and youth, including those that are marginalized and with disabilities.<sup>36</sup>

43. The Commonwealth Secretariat to mobilise parties (all member states) to the Convention towards the enforcement of Article 48(e) of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030; and to call for full implementation of the Warsaw Mechanism on Loss and Damage to fully account for the dire consequences of climate change.<sup>37</sup>
44. National and local governments to recognise the increasing intensity of climate change disasters, by formulating policies and initiatives that safeguard cities, communities and households against the effects of climate change and natural disasters; and integrating climate change education in school curricula at all levels.<sup>38</sup>
45. All member states to engage the youth in activities and projects relating to climate change mitigation, adaptation, relocation, disaster management with sufficient resourcing, raising awareness on the necessary changes at the grass root level in relation to climate change.<sup>39</sup>

### **Sustainable Use and Management of Energy and Natural Resources, Including Our Oceans and Tackling Plastics**

The young people of the Commonwealth call on:

46. All member states to commit to a long-term goal of phasing out fossil fuels subsidies and transitioning to 100% renewable energy by 2050 as a pathway for a world below 1.5 degrees Celsius, drawing on the insights and fervour young people have for creating a sustainable world.<sup>40</sup>
47. All member states to formulate and implement national policies which enable sustainable ocean governance and the 'Blue Economy' to address youth unemployment and job creation.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network (CYCN) Declaration at the UNFCCC COP22 Paris Climate Negotiations (2016)

<sup>37</sup> CYCN Declaration at the UNFCCC COP22 Paris Climate Negotiations (2016)

<sup>38</sup> Pacific Region Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting: Youth Leaders Forum Communiqué (2015)

<sup>39</sup> Pacific Region Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting: Youth Leaders Forum Communiqué (2015)

<sup>40</sup> Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network Declaration at the UNFCCC COP22 Paris Climate Negotiations (2016); Pacific Small Island Developing States Youth Leaders' Outcome Document (2014); One Young World 2017: Summit Highlights (2017)

<sup>41</sup> Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network Declaration at the UNFCCC COP22 Paris Climate Negotiations (2016)



48. All member states to adequately address the complex sustainability challenges of oceans and empower young people and women to participate in marine conservation and ocean governance processes.<sup>42</sup>

### **III) A Fairer Future**

49. We, the young people of the Commonwealth, reaffirm the importance of democracy, transparency, good governance, human rights and the rule of law as set out in the Commonwealth Charter. The promotion of just, equitable and inclusive societies is critical to ensuring sustainable development across the Commonwealth. Moreover, democracy, good governance and establishing strong, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels remains critical in attaining a fairer future. We, therefore, assert the need for comprehensive solutions to: address inequality; promote equity and equality of opportunity for all; achieve gender parity and respect for gender identities; protect and uphold the rights of marginalised and indigenous communities, as well as those of refugees; and enact legislation to achieve equitable and inclusive development outcomes for young people.

### **Inclusion and Equity**

The young people of the Commonwealth call on:

50. Member states to commit to the empowerment of girls and women, through legislative and societal changes, catalysed by targeted efforts to commit budget towards gender-sensitive policy implementation, with the consultation of women and the promotion of gender inclusive education.<sup>43</sup>

51. Member states to acknowledge that discrimination and violence against girls, women, the LGBTQI community and non-gender conforming individuals causes severe emotional and physical trauma, enhanced health risks, and diminished economic and social mobility.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth Sector Paper: High Level Political Forum 2017 (2017)

<sup>43</sup> United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth Sector Paper: High Level Political Forum 2017 (2017)

<sup>44</sup> United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth Sector Paper: High Level Political Forum 2017 (2017); Pacific Region Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting: Youth Leaders Forum Communiqué (2015);



52. National governments to recognise the hardships faced by refugees and to take collective action to ensure their safety and rights are upheld, especially for refugee women and children.<sup>45</sup>
53. All member states to renew their commitment to ‘Leave No One Behind’, recognising that many millions of children and young people still live in institutions, denied the love of a family and at increased risk of harm, neglect and violence. As part of this commitment, member states should: 1) allocate funding to end institutionalisation by transforming their care system to one that supports families not institutions; 2) gather better data about children’s care status, family environment and the scale of the proliferation of institutions for children; and 3) build the capacity and expertise of youth workers, social worker and health workers to be drivers of change and reform.<sup>46</sup>
54. National governments to ensure Human Rights Education is accessible and available to all persons, taking into account the particular challenges and barriers faced by, and the needs and expectations of, persons in vulnerable and disadvantaged situations and groups, including persons living with disabilities.<sup>47</sup>
55. All member states to go beyond acknowledging the existence of inequality in our societies and take significant action to tackle inequality in all its forms.<sup>48</sup>

## **Health and Well-Being**

The young people of the Commonwealth call on:

56. National governments to develop policies and programmes that will empower young people with disabilities by ensuring they have equal access to information, opportunities and facilities for their development. This should include ensuring the representation of disabled youths in policy making decisions; and ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth Sector Paper: High Level Political Forum 2017 (2017); One Young World 2017: Summit Highlights (2017)

<sup>46</sup> Transformation Commonwealth - Supporting families and ending the institutional care of children: Recommendations by Hope and Homes for Children and Child’s Foundation (2018)

<sup>47</sup> International Conference on Human Rights Education: Bridging Our Diversities: Declaration and Recommendations (2017)

<sup>48</sup> One Young World 2017: Summit Highlights (2017)

<sup>49</sup> Youth Declaration and Plan of Action for Youth Development in the Caribbean Region and Canada (2015)



57. All member states to address the growing mental health challenges in our societies by ensuring early detection, treatment of and support for mental health issues and promoting universal healthcare and education on sexual health and reproductive rights among adolescents and youth.<sup>50</sup>
58. National governments to accelerate progress towards ending the epidemics of malaria, AIDS, tuberculosis and other communicable diseases.<sup>51</sup>
59. All member states to adequately address emerging issues like antimicrobial resistance, infectious pandemics, and the shifting burden to non-communicable diseases that threaten progress on health gains.<sup>52</sup>
60. All member states to strengthen and scale up affordable and youth friendly health services linked to comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) programmes on family planning, HIV and harm reduction services as well as accelerate actions to end child marriage, female genital mutilation and other harmful traditional practices.<sup>53</sup>

### **Enhancing the role of Youth in Democracy and Governance**

The young people of the Commonwealth call on:

61. All member states to facilitate active youth participation in local, national and international governance processes by investing in citizenship and human rights education providers and fostering and financially supporting spaces for exchange and learning between them, to support the enhancement of the meaningful participation of all young people, including vulnerable groups, in society. Member states should also develop and/or review national action plans and national youth policies, with the active participation of youth.<sup>54</sup>
62. National governments to support the establishment of functional National Youth Councils in member states where they don't currently exist by 2020, and ensure that they are supported legitimately by an Act of Parliament, thereby securing the effective participation of youth in

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<sup>50</sup> Youth Declaration and Plan of Action for Youth Development in the Caribbean Region and Canada: Caribbean Region Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting (2015)

<sup>51</sup> World Health Organisation: World Malaria Report (2017)

<sup>52</sup> United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth Sector Paper: High Level Political Forum 2017 (2017)

<sup>53</sup> African Union BANJUL +10 Outcome Document (2016)

<sup>54</sup> The Abidjan Declaration: 4th Africa-Europe Youth Summit (2017)





national development and ensuring that National Youth Councils are truly representative of all youth and youth-led organisations nationally.<sup>55</sup>

63. National governments to allocate sufficient funding and resources to cover the operation, human resources and administrative expenses for National Youth Councils, while also enhancing funding, resources and support for other youth-focused and youth-led organisations.<sup>56</sup>
64. All member states to encourage young people to participate in local decision making and political processes, through awareness raising, mentoring, training, establishment of municipal youth councils, and to ensure that young people have the space to meaningfully engage in local democracy.<sup>57</sup>
65. All member states to ensure active youth participation in governance processes from the local to global level through adequate representation. Additionally, vulnerable groups in each country should be identified and adequately represented.<sup>58</sup>
66. National governments to engage youth in all election processes; to remove age-related barriers hindering young candidates standing for election at local and national levels (e.g bring the age of candidacy in line with the voting age); and to commit to supporting legislation and mechanisms for equity, justice and non-discrimination of all young candidates.<sup>59</sup>

### **Establishing and Promotion of the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of Young People**

The young people of the Commonwealth call on:

67. National governments to reaffirm their commitment to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and to take immediate action to advance the social, political and economic empowerment of young people, thereby ensuring their inclusion in, and contribution to broader development strategies.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Youth Declaration and Plan of Action for Youth Development in the Caribbean Region and Canada: Caribbean Region Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting (2015)

<sup>56</sup> 9th CYMM Youth Leaders Forum Resolutions (2017)

<sup>57</sup> Commonwealth Local Government Conference 2017: The Valletta Outcomes - Fit for the Future: Resources and Capacity for Effective Local Government (2017)

<sup>58</sup> Youth Declaration for Youth Engagement in the Asia Region: Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting (2015)

<sup>59</sup> The Abidjan Declaration: 4th Africa-Europe Youth Summit (2017)

<sup>60</sup> United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1967)



68. National governments to tailor national social protection schemes to include workers in the informal sector, migrant workers, refugees, marginalised groups, and those living in precarious conditions, including for reasons of legal status, and with insecure access to basic services. Governments should recognise that these groups are disproportionately affected by multidimensional poverty, due to several social, structural and political barriers.<sup>61</sup>
69. All member states to adopt a human rights-based approach to public and social policies in order to reach equitable development outcomes for and with young people. This should include incorporating the humanitarian context into the planning and implementation of all sustainable development policies; and working together with the international community to best ensure the realisation of the human rights and benefits of sustainable development, for all affected people.<sup>62</sup>

### **Conclusion**

70. The delegates of the 11<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Youth Forum thank the Government of the United Kingdom for hosting the 11<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Youth Forum and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commonwealth Youth Council General Assembly and look forward to the Government's continued support in promoting youth participation and engagement in the Commonwealth.
71. We welcome and encourage on-going partnership and collaboration between the Commonwealth Youth Council, Commonwealth Secretariat, member states and Commonwealth civil society in moving forward towards an inclusive and sustainable future for young people.
72. Towards a more prosperous, secure, sustainable and fairer Commonwealth, we call on governments, non-governmental organisations, agencies, donor partners, social and economic partners, and other stakeholders to partner with us to ensure that the policy priorities outlined above are implemented.

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<sup>61</sup> United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth Sector Paper: High Level Political Forum 2017 (2017)

<sup>62</sup> United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth Sector Paper: High Level Political Forum 2017 (2017)



## **Annex 1: Action Plan**

This Action Plan outlines the practical recommendations made by the young people of the Commonwealth, at the 11<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Youth Forum 2018, in London. Building upon the previous Action Plan (10<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Youth Forum), the recommendations support the 2018 Policy Declaration. The General Assembly adopted the following action plans in support of promoting a more prosperous future; a more secure future; a more sustainable future; and a fairer future.

### **I) A Prosperous Future**

- Development and adoption of an official, standardized and readily accessible online platform, which allows young people across the Commonwealth to easily access job opportunities, skills sharing, and crowd funding for new entrepreneurial ideas.
- Reform of the national curriculums of each country within the Commonwealth family to include entrepreneurship and development of a year-long entrepreneurial education program. The program would be incorporated into the curriculum of the final year of compulsory education, and the roll-out would begin with a regional pilot programme in each Commonwealth region.
- The establishment of a Pan-Commonwealth Fund to support the development of youth entrepreneurial endeavours, supporting them through the phases of ideation, incubation and accelerations, thus providing greater opportunities for young people to access enterprise funding.

### **II) A More Secure Future**

- The launch of an inclusive Pan-Commonwealth grass root movement that directly tackles racism and all forms of inter-group conflicts and discrimination, through a targeted strategy promoting respect and understanding.
- Advocacy for Commonwealth governments to develop a cyber-security statement of intent or legislation, prioritising the full participation of young people in all related processes.
- Appointment of a cross-sectoral Youth Task Team in each of the Commonwealth state to integrate and evaluate the principles of UNSCR 2250 at national level. This Task Team will also create space to ensure young people are at the centre of peace processes.
- Creation of existing good-practice community-based sports for development and peace interventions that recognise the role of sport in achieving the SDGs.
- Development and execution of accessible, adaptable and evidence based 'digital literacy education' intervention for youth of the Commonwealth, with a special focus on providing resources and training on smart cyber-use for all audiences, regardless of literacy or ability levels.



### III) **A More Sustainable Future**

- Establishment of a professionals and youth exchange network between Commonwealth countries, to enhance knowledge, share resources and provide mentorship for young people; and establishment of a waste exchange program for school students in which students can bring waste (such as plastics found on beaches) to recycling centres and exchange it for study materials made from previously recycled waste.
- Advocacy for governments to adopt a Commonwealth-wide plastic tax, inclusive of an incentivized plastic exchange scheme which exchanges plastic for money and other items.
- Adoption of a campaign to expand education about the causes, consequences, and individually actionable solutions of climate change to children aged 5-11 through national school curricula and beyond.
- Establishment of Climate Change and Resilience Youth Hubs in all member countries through an all of society approach (i.e. involvement of youth; Governments; NGO's; academics; climate change experts etc.).

### IV) **A Fairer Future**

- Development of an awareness and skills development program for members of marginalized groups (e.g. people with disabilities, LGBTQI+, women and girls, ex-convicts, sex workers and drug addicts in the Commonwealth), aimed at empowering marginalized youth in order to promote inclusion.
- Development of a standardized data collection/management tool for Commonwealth youth to identify and address pertinent health priorities and issues.
- Conduct research on mental health issues faced by youth in the Commonwealth, to be used as a baseline for upcoming projects, thus building the evidence base on young people's mental health across the Commonwealth.
- Establishment of a youth-led accountability mechanism that reports on the progress of government commitments to International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of Young People.
- Advocacy for member states to update and enforce protection policies for refugees (particularly women and children) for safeguarding their rights.