

Colombo Declaration on Sustainable, Inclusive and Equitable Development

Sri Lanka, 2013

1. We, the Commonwealth Heads of Government, recognise that accelerating growth has become central to policy efforts globally. However, we note that rising inequality at both international and national levels has implications for poverty reduction and future growth potential of member countries. Countries grappling with natural and man-made disasters and other pressing global challenges are the worst affected. This situation has led to the economic marginalisation of societies, within and among countries. Therefore, we agree that achieving growth with equity and inclusivity must be one of the main policy priorities for the Commonwealth, in keeping with the Commonwealth Charter adopted in December 2012.
2. We express our deep concern about the adverse impacts of the world financial and economic crises on development prospects, particularly in developing states. We emphasise the need to act decisively to tackle the challenges confronting the global economy to ensure balanced, sustainable, inclusive and equitable global growth with full and productive employment. We affirm the importance of reforms of the international trade, monetary and financial institutions in order to ensure fair representation for developing countries.
3. We recognise that improving access to productive employment is a critical element to achieve equitable growth and requires enhancing employability of the workforce and creating productive employment opportunities. Improvements in employability are largely linked to access to quality education, skills development, better healthcare and equitable access to resources. We agree to make concerted efforts to create productive employment with equitable access to all, to achieve inclusive growth.

4. We reaffirm the right to development for all individuals and commit ourselves to eliminate disparities and focus on making growth more inclusive for all, including for vulnerable groups, women, youth and the differently abled.
5. We recognise the importance of meaningful social protection for all in achieving inclusive development and also as an important tool in addressing poverty, inequality, vulnerability and social exclusion. Given the varying degrees of vulnerability to crises, particularly among the developing states, we underline the need for having proactive national initiatives on social protection, based on relevant international agreements.
6. Member countries of the Commonwealth are home to a diverse array of natural resources, which have been preserved and sustainably utilised over centuries for their benefit. We recognise the sovereign right of nations to manage their own natural resource base, according to national needs and priorities, in a sustainable manner, enabling their further growth and development.
7. We note the findings of the 2013 UN MDGs progress report, which states that some of the MDGs have already been met and that more targets are within reach by the 2015 target date. However, we are concerned that certain targets remain off track both globally and within the Commonwealth. We therefore call for an urgent implementation of all commitments undertaken, individually and collectively, in particular on Goal 8, related to global partnerships. We reaffirm our determination to collectively call for a strong and effective partnership for development, while emphasising that the successful achievement of the MDGs by 2015 should remain a global priority.
8. We therefore pledge to engage collectively and help shape the Post-2015 Development Agenda by constituting an open-ended high-level working group of Heads to identify, through a Commonwealth statement on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, our shared Commonwealth perspectives and recommendations. We will advance these shared perspectives through individual member governments in the intergovernmental consultations at the 69th Session of the UN General Assembly.
9. We welcome the report of the UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the report of the UN Secretary-General entitled *A Life of Dignity for All – Accelerating Progress Towards the Millennium Development Goals*

and Advancing the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015, the UN Development Group consultations, the UN Global Compact and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network. We note their contents as inputs into the intergovernmental process on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

10. As we seek to further strengthen the global partnership, we are aware of the wealth of knowledge, expertise and experience available within the Commonwealth which remains underutilised. We therefore commit to actively explore the unrealised potential for collaboration and partnerships within the Commonwealth. We also recognise it as a useful step to facilitate the efforts of individual member countries towards equitable distribution of benefits and to achieve better living standards and prosperity for all.
11. In the context of a rapidly changing global environment, achieving growth with equity and promoting sustainable development will require intensified efforts at both the national and international levels. At national level, this could be achieved through strengthened public administration and institutions and reinforcing accountability; developing the necessary institutional capacity, knowledge and skill levels, particularly among young people; promoting the smoother functioning and increasing openness of markets; and strengthening the private sector and expanding infrastructure to foster long-term growth, including by making full use of public–private partnerships (PPPs) as an investment tool to achieve sustainable development. At international level, we acknowledge the importance of strengthened financial, technical and institutional efforts to support national efforts in addressing vulnerability and building resilience and the need for new international approaches that respond to the rapidly changing global environment in which sustainable development policies are being pursued. We recognise the special role the Commonwealth can play in exchanging experiences and lessons learned.
12. In furthering partnership-building, we also recognise the useful contribution that tools such as Commonwealth Connects can bring to member countries and encourage its full use to enhance connectivity among the people of the Commonwealth.

13. We express our commitment to work towards developing supportive global policies to address poverty, food security, climate change mitigation and adaptation, inequalities in trade, predictable and adequate finances, investments, knowledge and technology transfers, as well as in increasing voices in the global economic, trade and financial order to achieve growth with equity.
14. We recall the Millennium Declaration and the outcome of the UN General Assembly special event on the MDGs. We reaffirm our commitment to the Millennium Declaration, the outcome document of Rio+20, the Monterrey Consensus, the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development, and the outcomes of all major UN conferences and summits in the economic, social and environmental fields. We will continue to be guided by the values and principles enshrined in these texts. We reaffirm all the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, including, inter alia, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, as set out in Principle 7 thereof.
15. We are of the firm view that our chosen national paths forward to realise sustainable, inclusive and equitable development in our societies can be reinforced and further advanced through concerted initiatives in the economic sphere. To this end, we request the Commonwealth Secretariat to convene and inform discussions at forthcoming Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meetings, drawing on inputs from members and expert development practitioners, on the key economic and other factors affecting Commonwealth member countries' ability to meet development goals, including the Post-2015 Development Agenda, once defined. This work should consider other areas of potential for economic co-operation within the Commonwealth. Progress will be reviewed at the next CHOGM in 2015.

17 November 2013

Issued at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting,
Colombo, Sri Lanka, 10 – 17 November, 2013