

Committee of the Whole

Meeting with Accredited Commonwealth Organisations

Submission by Commonwealth Civil Society Organisations
20 October 2015, Marlborough House



The Commonwealth

Contents

Background	1
Finding Commonwealth Solutions: Climate Change and the Blue Economy	2
Freedom of Expression in the Commonwealth: Rights and Responsibilities	6
The Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: Commonwealth Economic and Social Values	10
Civil Society: Adding Value in the Commonwealth	12
Civil society in action	16
Annex I: Profiles of the Commonwealth Accredited Organisations	20

Background

A reformed approach has been adopted in 2015 to the traditional interaction between accredited Commonwealth organisations and senior representatives of member governments, which occurs on the eve of the meeting of the Committee of the Whole. The reforms have aimed to strengthen the relevance of the contributions made by accredited organisations before the Communique of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) is developed through intergovernmental discussion.

Specifically, the accredited Commonwealth organisations met and decided that, rather than making individual submissions as in the past, they would develop four short thematic papers collectively, which reflect their shared views and suggestions, and which broadly reflect the priority themes that are likely to be reflected in leaders' discussions at the CHOGM.

The four thematic papers are:

- Finding Commonwealth Solutions: Climate Change and the Blue Economy;
- Freedom of Expression in the Commonwealth: Rights and Responsibilities;
- CHOGM 2015: Civil Society Statement on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: Economic and Social Values; and,
- Civil Society: Adding Value in the Commonwealth

There are 71 Commonwealth bodies in the 'Civil Society Organisations' category which have been accredited through the Accreditation Committee of the Board of Governors of the Commonwealth Secretariat, thus recognising their value to the Commonwealth and their commitment to its values and principles as outlined in the Commonwealth Charter. A small number of representatives from these organisations will attend the meeting with senior representatives of member governments in order to introduce the thematic papers and respond to questions and comments.

Another 9 organisations have been accredited by member governments through the Accreditation Committee into a separate category. These 'Associated Organisations' have prepared a separate document which is being circulated and which will be introduced separately during the meeting.

Action

Member governments are invited to Note the enclosed submissions.

Finding Commonwealth Solutions: Climate Change and the Blue Economy

"We see the Blue Economy concept as an opportunity to flip the oceans from a space for extraction to a space for development."

HE Jean-Paul Adam, Minister for Finance, Trade and the Blue Economy, Seychelles (Samoa, 2014)

1. 'Commonwealth solutions' to the challenges and opportunities of climate change should be viewed through the lens of the blue economy concept, and in the Commonwealth context of the priority placed on support to SIDS and stated commitments. Well-articulated by the Seychelles (above), the existential threats to communities from climate change and the importance of action this year focus attention.
2. The importance of the SIDS rests in both their vulnerability to changes in climate and the oceans, and in their capacity to lead and implement policy innovation in addressing these in an integrated way. The special natural resource base of 'the big ocean states' must be developed by drawing on opportunities in marine resources (mineral and fisheries) and renewable energy (on and off-shore). A blueprint may be found in SIDS' approach to the blue economy that can be scaled up: finance mechanisms (e.g. debt for adaptation swaps), ambitious targets, data repositories, training, marine spatial planning. All these can draw on the resources and support of Commonwealth Organisations (COs).
3. The outcome must be sustainable livelihoods for communities, particularly those most dependent on natural resources. This requires that we focus on development that supports citizen engagement in decision-making and creates decent work. 'Blue capital' can provide for much-needed youth employment in a sustainable and meaningful economy.
4. We have identified vital emergent qualities in the Commonwealth Association and Member countries. These include the practice of 'open doors' across the Commonwealth, which helps partnership, particularly South-South or South-North¹. The inclusion of culture, the 'fourth pillar' of sustainability, in the Commonwealth's remit is one of its strengths. Another is innovation in implementation of the Strategic Plan that includes a growing capacity for oceans and natural resources in partnership with member countries to develop the 'blue economy'. We welcome the strengthening of partnership

1 Compare, for example, the partnership launched at the SIDS Samoa conference <http://www.sids2014.org/index.php?page=view&type=1006&nr=2705&menu=1507> "Learning from the Sharp End of Environmental Uncertainty in SIDS": The Sharp End Partnership.

support for Commonwealth Organisations in the Secretariat and emphasise the benefit for the Commonwealth Project of creating opportunities for still greater collaboration in the sharing of knowledge and expertise.

5. We view as positive the creation of a unit within the Commonwealth Secretariat that combines Health and Education; this will encourage greater cross-sectoral analysis and work. The key nexus here is between SDG14 (oceans), SDG7 (energy), SDG4 (education), SDG 13 (climate change) and SDG 12 (sustainable production and consumption) and their universal applicability. The SDGs provide a basis for development of a 'modern' society and economy, without losing life-enhancing cultural and natural endowments, and that can remove incentives to migration out of rural, particularly coastal, communities.
6. The means of implementation need to be considered in terms of institutions, behaviours and cultural practices. Three recent initiatives serve as indicators for a wider change in consciousness. First is the Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network (CYCN) Expert Group Meeting (June 2015) set of recommendations, which we commend², second is the work on blue capital³ and third, an initiative to link cultural institutions to enhance appreciation of what gives meaning to the overall initiative⁴

Recommendations for the Committee of the Whole

Recommendation 1: Prioritise action to ensure provision of accessible, quality data for implementation of the SDGs and to address serious data gaps related to SIDS:

- Ensure provision of climate change and renewable energy data which is sufficient for evidence-based policy development and assessment and for evaluation of implementation of SDG 14 (Oceans).
- Strengthen SIDS' capacity, through regional hubs, to produce and manage data and render it accessible.
- Create a visually accessible Youth Vulnerability Index, in the form of an online map using infographics.

Recommendation 2: Increase provision of education and training for employment in the blue economy and climate change sectors that is life-long, but with the emphasis on youth:

- Ensure all school leavers and graduates from SIDS have information and skills

² Reference: CYCN Expert Group Meeting on Climate Change, June 2015
http://www.yourcommonwealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Commonwealth-Youth-EGM_Recomdation.pdf

³ Milligan, B. at al, forthcoming (2015) *The Blue Capital Report. Costs and benefits of investment in marine and coastal natural assets. Collaborative options for realising the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.*

⁴ Exhibition 'Fish, Fishing and Fishing-dependent Communities', CAM/CHEC/Sharp End Partnership: project under development.

appropriate to deployment in the blue economy, from fitting PV panels to financing renewables and sustainable fisheries.

- Ensure integration of accessible climate change education in primary and secondary school curricula⁵.
- Identify and support networks of institutions for education and training, including the participation of local stakeholders, by means of the Commonwealth Education Hub.
- Ensure that policy interventions by experts/consultants leave behind a skills legacy through engagement of local partners, particularly young experts or trainees.

Recommendation 3: Encourage citizen participation in reporting, public awareness and 'culture':

- Recognise the importance of cultural considerations and institutions, including the work of Commonwealth specialist agencies, in raising awareness of what we are protecting, and what needs developing.
- Utilise 'citizen science' to raise awareness of climate change, its consequences, and the opportunities offered by adaptation and mitigation strategies to develop decent work and entrepreneurial opportunities.
- Strengthen human rights considerations and ensure active citizen participation, particularly of youth and women, and institutional transparency and accountability, in order to hold governments accountable.

Recommendation 4: Develop greater coordination of Commonwealth actors (e.g. in education, with UN organisations⁶, relevant regional bodies and individual Commonwealth citizens) to build partnerships and expertise for innovative funding and knowledge management:

- **Mobilise climate finance for blue economy initiatives from public and private sources, including from non-Commonwealth governments; the Mauritius Commonwealth Climate Finance Skills Hub is commended as an initiative to develop skills in financing, research and monitoring capacity.**
- **Create a Knowledge Hub for Climate Change and the Blue Economy.**
- Ensure partnerships, including those of Commonwealth IGOs and COs, give attention to the needs of women and youth and integrate the peoples of the small island overseas territories.
- Develop a stronger Commonwealth regional identity via those regional bodies engaged with climate and marine resources which have substantial Commonwealth membership and leadership⁷.

5 As recommended in the Communiqué of the 1st Pacific Region Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting 1-3 September 2015 | Apia, Samoa 'Youth as Partners in Sustainable Small Island Development', para. 17.

6 COL VUSSC, ACU, ComSec Health and Education, Commonwealth Education Hub; relevant COs and CSOs: (CEC, CCfE, CHEC, CAM) as evidenced at 19CCEM; UNESCO: UNEVOC, UNIDO, Intangible Cultural Heritage), the EU (EDF, ACP-EU),

7 Consider, for example CARICOM, Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, or 5Cs; Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism University of the West Indies UWI; Pacific Islands Forum, South Pacific Regional Environment Programme SPREP; University of the South Pacific USP; The Indian Ocean Commission; the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission.

Recommendation 5: Opportunities for Youth⁸

- Promote 'climate smart' youth employment and entrepreneurship in the blue and green economies, including youth-led enterprises and low carbon agriculture and fisheries development initiatives.
- Build the capacity of young people to engage in developing resilience to disasters, as indicated in the Sendai Framework⁹ and the CYCN EGM's recommendations.
- Enable the CYCN to present recommendations at the Malta CHOGM Special Session on Climate Change.

Commonwealth Organisations' Commitment

For our part, we stand ready to deliver to our own strengths in support of the above recommendations and Commonwealth values and to work with all relevant stakeholders, institutions and Member countries in achieving them, including where this requires enhanced reflexivity and transparency on our part. We commit to exploring and prosecuting ways of mobilising Commonwealth citizens and securing resources for our recommendations that go beyond reliance on public funding. We ask that state actors create the enabling environment and institutional framework to support our Commonwealth roles and efforts. However, the Commonwealth Organisations sector has been seriously weakened by the removal of pump-priming core support, which has threatened their survival and hampers the mobilisation of voluntary efforts. We further recommend that the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Foundation review policies and partnership arrangements which cannot continue to be based on our sector providing free services and expertise. Core support via meaningful and properly funded partnership and consultancy arrangements commensurate with expertise should be provided to those organisations (including young volunteers and young experts) able to demonstrate delivery of results and added value.

⁸ Here, as elsewhere in the paper, we acknowledge our debt to the CYCN report.

⁹ Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030

Freedom of Expression in the Commonwealth: Rights and Responsibilities

Introduction

Freedom of Expression is recognised by the United Nations as a fundamental Human Right. A strong, well-trained, independent, and responsible media, supported by civil society is essential to human development and democratic societies.

The Commonwealth Charter enshrines freedom of expression as one of the core values and principles of the Commonwealth and commits the people of the Commonwealth 'to peaceful, open dialogue and the free flow of information, including through a free and responsible media.'

<http://thecommonwealth.org/our-charter>

In upholding the commitment by Heads of State to the Charter, we request that the committee consider the current concerns, and the future, for freedom of expression in the Commonwealth under the following headings:

- The current state of media: the pace of change and potential risks;
- Commonwealth pledges to professional media workers: the law and support systems;
- Accessibility to all in a secure environment.
- Recommendations.

1. The current state of media: the pace of change and potential risks

Regrettably the pledges by Heads of Government are often forgotten between summits. At this year's heads of government meeting in Malta, we urge the Commonwealth leaders to demonstrate that they recognise the importance of their previous commitment to freedom of expression as enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter.

We urge them to support the work of drawing up guidelines for "good practice" to be shared with the governments of the Commonwealth with the goal of achieving an enabling environment for all forms of media for the benefit of all citizens of the Commonwealth.

We ask the committee to acknowledge, in keeping with the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, that freedom of expression applies not only to professional journalists but also to the wider community of those who use and disseminate information available from all sources

for informed decision making; it should also be upheld, in the workings of the legal systems and for civil society groups which support citizens who use modern media tools such as the internet and social media channels.

A balance needs to be found to ensure that both professional media persons and private individuals are able to provide free commentary and to exchange ideas and information with an underlying system of law and civil society which supports freedom of expression rather than constraining it.

We request that the committee considers giving active support for the further education programmes required for the use of social media, for both youth and adults, to address the increasing risk to vulnerable citizens (particularly young people) who may be "groomed" or enticed into acts of terrorism or other illegal activities through pressure exerted on social media and the internet and noting the increased risk posed by all forms of cybercrime.

We urge COW to consider the rapid growth of social media in the Commonwealth community, and the ability of a professional, free, media to inform, empower, and educate for the positive good*.

*Examples to inform and disseminate real-time information: Nigerian Elections
<https://twitter.com/search?q=Nigeria%20Electgions&src=typd>

2. Commonwealth pledges to professional media workers.

Heads of Government have often pledged to promote freedom of expression. Thus, in their 2013 communique they stated:

"Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to peaceful, open dialogue and the free flow of information, including through a free and responsible media, and to enhancing democratic traditions and strengthening democratic processes... Heads noted that social media had introduced a new dimension and agreed to share best practices within the Commonwealth to respond to the resultant opportunities and challenges. They also affirmed that the same rights and responsibilities that people have offline must also be protected online, in particular freedom of expression, in accordance with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights."

Reference: Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting 2013:
 Final Communique

http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/events/documents/CHOGM%202013%20Communique_0.pdf

For good governance, transparency and accountability, central planks of the Commonwealth Charter, freedom of expression is essential. Unfortunately, in many Commonwealth countries, media workers are still threatened, arrested, and killed by forces that fear exposure of crimes and malpractice. The existing legal frameworks in which freedom of expression is exercised* may now be outdated or unsuitable for the modern environment but remain the only laws available to many Commonwealth states.

We believe further work is necessary in this area by reviewing laws pertaining to the freedom of expression and considering appropriate reforms for the improvement of relevance to the modern day tools available to both professional journalists and the wider public. We propose an extended joint study (subject to the availability of funding) by the undersigned groups and in further consultation with additional civil society groups, for completion prior to the Law Minister's meeting in 2016.

*Examples: Scandalising the Court – *Doocharika v The Director of Public Prosecutions*
<https://www.jcpc.uk/cases/docs/jcpc-2012-0058-judgment.pdf>

Human Rights Lawyer Karpal Singh [deceased] prosecuted under the Sedition Act
<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/karpal-found-guilty-of-sedition>

3. Accessibility to all in a safe environment

If the Commonwealth is to be seen as a credible international organisation taking the lead on global issues it needs to demonstrate that it gives priority to freedom of expression as a basic human rights. The threats to freedom of expression have intensified with the expansion of digital journalism and social media.

**For example, four bloggers were recently killed for espousing secularism, while lawyers who defend their clients accused under laws related to free speech are regularly threatened, or killed in the course of the work.

Free speech is widely undermined through the use of anti-terrorism, blasphemy and other laws, as an expedient way to stifle dissent. As a result of this pressure many journalists are resorting to self-censorship in order to protect their families and livelihoods, pushing the dissemination of information and dissenting opinions into underground channels. Controlled licensing of newspapers and publishers often further inhibits the ability of a free press. We believe that the proposal contained in the Trans-Pacific Partnership https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trans-Pacific_Partnership and the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/in-focus/ttip/> negotiations, for a significant increase in the power of private corporations and for limitations on the ability of national and local governments to pursue appropriate social policies pose a threat to freedom of expression, democracy, accountability and human rights.

4. Recommendations

1. We request that Heads of Government mandate law ministers to consider the preparation of model laws and to devise a set of good practices to be adopted by Commonwealth Member countries for the protection of freedom of expression, in consultation with civil society stakeholders. This mandate should include the introduction of measures to protect professional journalists from unjust prosecution in respect of their legitimate professional activities;
2. The reform of existing laws which unnecessarily curb freedom of expression in the context of the relevance of such laws in a rapidly changing technical and security environment;

3. Consider additional measures to counter the increasing problem of the risk (with emphasis on youth) of "grooming" through social media and the internet for the purpose of inciting acts of hatred, acts of terrorism, and abuse and to assist civil society to combat this through increased education programmes;

Upholding the rule of law

4. Recognise the contribution of a free and professional media, to assist and promote informed decision-making through the provision to the public of fair and high-quality news and information in an professional and unbiased manner;
5. Recognise and strengthen the support provided by civil society groups dealing with legal and social issues surrounding freedom of information.

Summary

We urge Commonwealth leaders in Malta to set an example by announcing measures to strengthen and promote freedom of expression. A bold and free press and electronic media serve to bolster good governance and a healthy democracy – values shared by all Commonwealth governments and peoples. The Committee is urged to endorse and progress the commitment to freedom of expression embodied in 2013 communique and to support the implementation of the recommendations contained in this paper.

We would like to thank the Commonwealth Secretariat for hosting this meeting and we thank the Committee for their time and attention.

The Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: Commonwealth Economic and Social Values

1. Recognising the importance of the Colombo Declaration on Sustainable Development adopted by Heads at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Sri Lanka in 2013 which sets out a clear agenda for delivering sustainable, inclusive and equitable development in the countries of the Commonwealth;
2. Noting that this declaration specifically commits Commonwealth nations to act decisively to tackle the challenges confronting the global economy to ensure balanced, sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth, to addressing poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion, to developing capacity and to strengthening partnerships and that it reaffirms member nations' determination to collectively call for a strong and effective partnership for development;
3. Acknowledging the extensive engagement and debates which culminated in the comprehensive zero draft of the Sustainable Development Goals to which Commonwealth nations will commit at the UN General Assembly meeting in 2015 and which are consistent with Commonwealth values as expressed in the Commonwealth Charter, and which will inform the work of Commonwealth states for the period 2015 to 2030;
4. Noting that the SDGs reflect an important set of goals and targets which constitute a critically important global agenda for action over the next 15 years;
5. Noting the 2015 Gaborone Declaration – Local Government Vision 2030 which acknowledges the key role of local government in promoting sustained economic growth, promoting local democracy and good governance and in being key partners at both the national and international level in delivering a sustainable future;
6. Recording the approval by member countries of the United Nations of the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning at the UN Habitat Governing Council meeting in April 2015 which sets out a clear global framework for improving policies, plans and implementation processes for more compact, socially inclusive, better integrated and connected cities and territories and which sets out to develop a universally applicable reference framework to guide urban policy reforms; to capture universal principles from national and local experiences that could support
7. the development of diverse planning approaches adapted to different

contexts and scales; and to raise the urban and territorial dimensions of the development agendas of national, regional and local governments;

8. Recording the responses regarding the SDGs from civil society representatives from around the Commonwealth in preparation of the drafting of this statement indicating that civil society:
 - Welcomes the initiative and eagerly looks forward to governments taking the lead as rallying points;
 - Sees the need for far greater awareness of the SDGs at all levels in all governments, including amongst the general public and decision makers;
 - Requires clear policy and programme directives from national governments, being the organs of state responsible for their delivery;
 - Argues for use of the SDGs to reinforce existing initiatives and innovate new measures in order to address country specific matters;
 - Requires Commonwealth – level advocacy and collaboration across all spheres of government and with civil society, regarding process, policies and programmes and where possible to develop concrete schemes of collaboration between member countries;
 - Sees the necessity of capacity building and resource allocation to all levels of government and civil society to deliver the outcomes required in only 15 years;
 - Argues that the SDGs cannot be delivered within 15 years other than through partnerships between spheres of government, with civil society and between nations.

Civil Society calls upon Heads of Government in the Commonwealth to:

9. Lead by example in expressing their commitment to planning and implementing the SDGs over the next 15 years in partnership with other spheres of government and with civil society in all its forms, including the private sector;
10. Urgently prepare integrated strategies, policies and programmes, informed by long term strategic vision, participatory processes and local context, for the implementation of the SDGs over the next 15 years;
11. Commit to establishing nationally specific and binding SDG goals and targets for monitoring the achievement of the SDGs;
12. Empower civil society and other spheres of government to play a full role in the delivery of the SDGs through awareness raising, capacity building and resource allocation, as well as through dialogue, information collection and knowledge sharing, using new technologies to enhance civil society participation;
13. Undertake legislative and regulatory reform to build a solid framework for the development planning needed to deliver a sustainable urban future;
14. Support Commonwealth – wide co-ordination through a dedicated Commonwealth SDG programme, building on the State of the Commonwealth Cities Programme adopted by Heads at its meeting in Port of Spain in 2009 and utilising the potential of research and information technology to better inform policy and manage places.

Civil Society: Adding Value in the Commonwealth

1. The undersigned group of accredited Commonwealth organisations welcomes the opportunity to make this statement to Heads of Government through the Committee of the Whole.
2. The modern Commonwealth is much more than a political grouping of states. In its fullest sense it is a “Commonwealth of the people” – the term used by the Eminent Persons Group in its report for the 2011 CHOGM, recognising that the “wealth of the association lies in the common bonds of the people”. The presence at its heart of a healthy and active civil society is key both to a full understanding of the Commonwealth and to its success.
3. Civil society in its many guises – NGOs, faith-based organisations, social movements, community groups, academic institutions, voluntary associations, professional societies, sporting and recreational clubs etc. – operates from local grass roots to international level, representing a kaleidoscope of priorities, interests and concerns. Throughout the world and particularly in the Commonwealth, civil society has played a key role alongside governments in addressing societal challenges and in driving progress.
4. The Commonwealth is strongest when its constituent parts – member countries, the inter-governmental Commonwealth institutions and civil society organisations – work in partnership towards common goals. As the Commonwealth grapples with the global challenges of today – in particular climate change, extremism, migration, conflict, health security, poverty, inequality and the fallout from the global economic crisis – the role of civil society is as important as ever, in connecting people, forging new thinking and building resilience. A vibrant and enabled civil society is integral to building peaceful, just and economically sustainable societies.
5. Collaboration and partnership between the intergovernmental structures of the Commonwealth and civil society has long been recognised as intrinsic to its wellbeing. That is why, so imaginatively, the Commonwealth Foundation was established 50 years ago alongside the Commonwealth Secretariat. Today, within the broader spectrum of Commonwealth civil society, the 80+ Accredited Organisations of the Commonwealth play a distinctive role, bringing to bear their specialist knowledge of Commonwealth capacities and procedures and their public commitment to strengthening the association and its values, fostering Commonwealth identity and promoting cooperation for development.

Adding Value

6. The theme of this year's CHOGM is “adding global value”.

The Commonwealth is undeniably a richer, fairer and more vibrant space when civil society is empowered, adding value in multiple fundamental ways:

- Agility: adapting and responding quickly to changing events;
- Commonwealth values: working alongside governments and all stakeholders to realise the common values set out in the Commonwealth Charter.
- Democracy: a champion of democracy, increasing civic interest and participation in democratic processes;
- Empowerment: unlocking and enhancing human potential;
- Expertise: bringing specialist knowledge and skills from every field to improve decision making and shape policy;
- Good governance: a watchdog on power, holding institutions to account and demanding transparency and accountability;
- Human rights: a promoter and multiplier of rights and freedoms;
- Innovation: an engine room for ideas, generating new thinking and creative solutions to problems;
- Local reach: sounding-boards for government, improving understanding of policy impact on different groups and communities;
- Representation: giving voice to diverse and marginalised groups and broadening public debate;
- Service provision: meeting diverse needs and interests, including education, health, culture, sport, food and shelter, for mainstream society and those at its furthest reaches;
- Social cohesion: binding societies together by creating connections and understanding across social boundaries and between government and citizens.

The Commonwealth and Civil Society

7. Commonwealth leaders have repeatedly emphasised the contribution of civil society, most notably in the Commonwealth Charter. Chapter 16 recognises: the important role that civil society plays in our communities and countries as partners in promoting and supporting Commonwealth values and principles, including the freedom of association and peaceful assembly, and in achieving development goals.
8. Similar sentiments are expressed in the Latimer House Principles (2003); Aberdeen Agenda: Commonwealth principles on good practice for local democracy and good governance (2005); Trinidad and Tobago Affirmation of Commonwealth Values and Principles (2009); and the Perth Declaration on Food Security Principles (2011).
9. The Commonwealth Charter also places a specific emphasis on freedom of expression (chapter v.), and on human rights more broadly (chapter ii.), as core values of the association. The freedoms of expression, association and assembly are rights central to civic activity, enabling people to mobilise for change. Most core international human rights treaties include provisions

directly relevant to the protection of public freedoms, and all refer to the principle of non-discrimination.

Civil Society Under Threat

10. Civil society is recognised as a powerful catalyst for progress. Where civic activity thrives, so do economies and societies. But hard won progress is being undermined by threats to civic space and new cultural norms that strike at the roots of community and togetherness. Despite the broad recognition of the value of civil society by the Commonwealth, in its Charter and through the various statements of its leaders, the conditions for civil society are deteriorating in many parts of the world.
11. This deeply worrying trend is manifested in the introduction of laws that restrict the freedoms of assembly, association and expression, including aspects of antiterrorism legislation; in onerous new requirements for the registration and regulation of civil society organisations, consuming their resources and limiting their effectiveness; in the banning of organisations or activities; in controls imposed on the receipt of funding support from Commonwealth and other overseas partners; in hostile rhetoric and other forms of harassment and intimidation; and in physical attacks on individuals and organisations, in some cases resulting in imprisonment or death.

Recommendations

1. An enabling environment for civil society

We urge you as representatives of Commonwealth governments to prioritise an enabling environment for civil society, by taking the following actions:

- Establish an enabling legal and regulatory environment for civil society organisations, which recognises their independence and right to carry out their peaceful work, within the confines of established law, without fear of harassment, reprisal, intimidation or discrimination.
- Pursue policies, with appropriate legal and financial provisions, to support the creation and operation of civil society organisations of different kinds, using them where feasible as vehicles of delivery for public services.
- Respect, protect and fulfil the rights to freedoms of association and assembly, as well as the freedom of expression, including the right to information, in accordance with Commonwealth values and international human rights standards.
- Take all necessary measures to ensure that all sectors of society – including women, youth and vulnerable groups – are able to exercise their right to impart and access information without discrimination, including through the media and information and communication technologies (ICTs).
- Take proactive measures to promote the effective participation of civil society, including the marginalised and discriminated, in the design and execution of development strategies.
- Institute and implement measures to distribute economic and political power more widely.

2. Civil society engagement in Commonwealth official business

All ministerial and other high-level meetings of the Commonwealth, including CHOGM, should make appropriate arrangements for access of Commonwealth Accredited Organisations, in recognition of their accredited status and specialist expertise. Specifically, Commonwealth Accredited Organisations should be:

- Eligible to attend meetings (apart from closed sessions), as observers.
- Given sufficient advance notice of meetings, access to (non-confidential) background papers and agenda, and relevant details for participating.
- Invited to make technical contributions in the form of written or oral submissions, according to particular areas of expertise, with mechanisms to submit papers in advance via the Secretariat.
- Able to participate fully in any official fora held in parallel with the main meeting, with opportunities created for any such fora to report formally to the main meeting.
- Advised of meeting outcomes, particularly the decisions of CMAG, by which they are expected to abide.
- Provided with appropriate arrangements for gaining access to member state delegations at CHOGM and other high-level Commonwealth meetings.
- Invited to participate in official follow-up meetings and consultations with member governments after such events – particularly CHOGM – facilitated by the Secretariat.

3. Ongoing dialogue with Commonwealth Secretariat

The creation of a partnerships team within the Secretariat is a welcome step. Recognising the importance of regular and meaningful engagement between the Commonwealth Secretariat and Accredited Organisations, the Secretariat should:

- Continue to facilitate regular meetings and consultations with Accredited Organisations, affording all an equal status, and making special arrangements to facilitate the engagement of those not based in London.
- Publish a partnership strategy with a statement of principles for cooperation.
- Deepen its knowledge of the capacity of Accredited Organisations to contribute to its work, identifying and making known opportunities for them to act as consultants and executing agencies in Secretariat programmes.

Civil society in action

There are countless examples of civil society in action, working to improve the Commonwealth and the lives of its citizens.



Advancing democracy

Following the elections in Sri Lanka in January, the Commonwealth Observer Group commended civil society groups for the role they played in monitoring and reporting during the election period, acknowledging "their robust and fearless work ensured that democratic processes were safeguarded." Similarly, Commonwealth observers of the Nigerian national election in April praised civil society groups, young people and other stakeholders for "pressuring competing factions to refrain from violence."

In Fiji and Malawi during national elections of 2014, civil society organisations played a crucial role, in conducting civic and voter education, particularly – in the case of Fiji – for the high proportion of young and first time voters and those living in remote areas. And in Scotland civil society groups helped to get out the vote, especially among young people, in the historic 2014 independence referendum, which recorded the highest voter turnout in a UK election in a century.

Global governance

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which entered into force in December 2014, is in many ways a triumph of civil society activism. The original idea for a treaty and the momentum behind the hugely successful global campaign to generate support for it – from a position of almost none – was orchestrated by civil society. The result is a treaty, currently signed or ratified by 130 countries including 75% of Commonwealth members, that introduces for the first time regulations and approval processes for international arms sales. It is a significant contribution to improved global governance.

The Commonwealth Latimer House Principles, on the accountability of and relationship between the three branches of Government in member countries – adopted by Commonwealth Heads of Government in Abuja, 2003 – were the product of a partnership between three accredited Commonwealth legal NGOs, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Commonwealth Secretariat. They are an important contribution to securing the fundamental political values of the Commonwealth.

Improving development outcomes

Civil society has played a more central role in shaping the post-2015 development agenda – particularly through active participation in the Open Working Group process and the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders dialogue – and will be crucial to the delivery of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon emphasised recently: "the task of implementing and monitoring these goals is huge. It requires States to work in strong and close partnership with civil society

of all stripes." Lack of civil society participation in the creation of the Millennium Development Goals has been cited as a factor that limited public awareness and ownership of the goals, resulting in the shortfall of efforts to meet them.



Global health

Civil society has played a crucial role in the global effort to combat polio, through fundraising and tireless advocacy. Rotary International, working in close collaboration with Commonwealth governments, put eradication of the disease on the global agenda, inspiring creation of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative in 1988. Civil society actors in many Commonwealth countries have contributed almost US\$110 million to the fight through their local Rotary clubs and helped mobilise more than US\$2 billion in additional funding from Commonwealth governments. The result has been a reduction in the number of polio cases from 350,000 in 1988 to just 37 as of August 2015. 13 million people are walking today that would otherwise be paralysed. Investments in polio eradication also contribute to health systems strengthening and improving routine immunisation.

Connecting people

Civil society organisations provide trusted links to people with limited opportunities to raise their voices. NGOs, faith groups and other civil society bodies can reach marginalised communities and enable connections to be made for support and mutual learning. In many countries national networks of NGOs (such as the Nigeria National Network of NGOs or Voluntary Action Network India) can provide a forum for dialogue, build skills and shared understanding to enable common solutions to be found.

Heritage organizations such as museums provide unique inter-generational opportunities, reinforcing a sense of place and belonging that is essential to community engagement.

Providing essential services

In many countries of the Commonwealth there is a rich history of public service delivery through partnerships between governments and civil society. In many cases associations and foundations have been engaged in delivering social care, for example elderly care or youth services, far longer than state delivery of these services. Such associations with specialist knowledge and committed community roots are often critical for the life-changing support that is needed by vulnerable individuals.

Enhancing decision-making

By bringing together local knowledge and trusted links in key communities, civil society can offer a useful bridge to constituencies that are affected by changes in policy. Tried and tested models of participatory democracy, such as participatory budgeting or citizens' panels have been proven to enhance decision-making as they draw on local expert knowledge. These approaches also enable greater transparency and trust in decision-making processes by improving the ability to allocate resources in a just and equitable manner.

Annex I: Profiles of the Commonwealth Accredited Organisations

Associated Organisations

Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM)

The Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM) was established by Commonwealth countries to promote the practical requirements of good governance. CAPAM serves its members as a centre of excellence and endeavours to build a more responsive and dynamic public service by providing a forum for the active exchange of innovative ideas, knowledge and practice in citizen-centred service delivery, leadership development and growth, and public service management and renewal. CAPAM represents an international network of senior government decision makers, public service managers, global researchers and non-governmental organisations located in over 50 countries.

Commonwealth Association of Tax Administrators (CATA)

The Commonwealth Association of Tax Administrators, established in 1978 by a decision of the Commonwealth Finance Ministers, helps member countries through conferences, training programmes, publications and knowledge sharing to develop effective tax administrations that promote sustainable development and good governance. Forty-seven Commonwealth countries are currently active members of CATA.

Conference of Commonwealth Postal Administrators (CCPA)

The CCPA was formed at the behest of Royal Mail International (RMI) in 1971. The CCPA has, since its foundation, remained an informal grouping of Postal Designated Operators drawn from across the entire globe but strongly tied by Commonwealth roots.

Conference of Commonwealth Meteorologists (CCM)

The CCM is both a convening and an informal network of the heads of Commonwealth national meteorological and hydrological services (NMHSs). The CCM, which was first established in 1929, gives directors the opportunity to discuss and resolve issues of mutual concern. The aim of the CCM is to enhance the benefits of meteorology to society (Reference 564 The Commonwealth Yearbook 2013) through increased co-operation between NMHSs, governments and other organisations including the private sector.

Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF)

The CGF is the organisation responsible for the direction and control of the Commonwealth Games. The Commonwealth Games is a unique, world class, multi-sports event which is held once every four years. It is often referred to as the 'Friendly Games'. As a means of improving society and the general well-being of the people of the Commonwealth, the CGF also encourages and assists education via sport development and physical recreation.

Commonwealth Education Trust (CET)

CET is built on the premise that education is the foundation for development. Its purpose is to advance primary and secondary education across the Commonwealth with a strong focus on teacher professional development. It encourages innovation and shares best practice from across the Commonwealth to assist teachers and young people develop the understanding and skills to contribute to the development of sustainable communities

Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF)

CLGF works to promote and strengthen democratic local government across the Commonwealth and to encourage the exchange of best practice – through conferences and events, projects and research. Working with national and local governments to support the development of democratic values and good local governance. As a Commonwealth organisation, CLGF draws on the influential network of the Commonwealth that provides a solid basis for its programmes and activities. As an associated organisation officially recognised by Commonwealth Heads of Government, CLGF is well-placed to influence policy development and lead on democracy and good governance at local level.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)

The CPA links members of national, state, provincial and territorial parliaments and legislatures across the Commonwealth. Its mission is to promote the advancement of parliamentary democracy by enhancing knowledge and understanding of democratic governance.

Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO)

The CTO is the Commonwealth organisation engaged in multilateral collaboration in ICTs, supporting members in integrating ICTs in their development efforts. Since 1985, it has delivered to members in Europe, the Caribbean, the Americas, Africa, Asia and the Pacific region over 3,800 ICT professional training programmes to support their policy, regulatory and industry development efforts. This history as a development facilitator provides the Organisation with a unique delivery capacity for ICT4D services. More recently, the CTO has expanded its research and consultancy services, with a particular focus on Cybersecurity, Regulation, Broadband, ICTs and youth, Skills and entrepreneurship, ICTs and disability.

Civil Society Organisations

African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)

The African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS) is independent, non-profit regional human rights NGO based in Banjul, The Gambia. The African Centre promotes human rights and democracy issues in the African continent through training, advocacy, networking, action-oriented research, publications and documentation.

The African Centre builds bridges between Inter-Governmental Organisations (IGOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), as well as between and among NGOs. It maintains networks of communications, human rights education and research among others.

Association of Commonwealth Archivists and Record Managers (ACARM)

The Association of Commonwealth Archivists and Records Managers (ACARM) was founded in 1984 to provide a link for archival institutions, archivists and records managers across the Commonwealth. What makes this link especially important is the common heritage of legal and administrative systems, and hence of record keeping practices.

In furtherance of its objectives ACARM has established a network of Commonwealth professionals in its field and has used that network to develop a practical strategy for solving record keeping problems in public administration.

Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (ACLALS)

The objectives of ACLALS are to promote and coordinate Commonwealth Literature Studies, organize seminars and workshops, arrange lectures by writers and scholars, publish a newsletter about activities in the field of Commonwealth Literature and hold one conference triennially.

The last conference took place in August 2013 in St Lucia in the Caribbean, and the next edition will be held in Stellenbosch, South Africa, in July 2016.

Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU)

The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) is the world's first and oldest international university network, established in 1913.

A UK-registered charity, the ACU has over 500 member institutions in developed and developing countries across the Commonwealth. Drawing on the collective experience and expertise of our membership, the ACU seeks to address issues in international higher education through a range of projects, networks, and events.

The ACU administers scholarships, provides academic research and leadership on issues in the sector, and promotes inter-university cooperation and the sharing of good practice – helping universities serve their communities, now and into the future.

Association of Emerging Leaders' Dialogue (AELD)

The Association of Emerging Leaders Dialogue (AELD) is a network of leaders in Business, Labour, Government and Civil Societies who are passionate about developing young leaders across the Commonwealth. Its focus is on developing, strengthening and supporting emerging leaders' through 'in-field' learning, and creating opportunities for emerging leaders to gain new skill sets and build sustaining peer networks. A unique leadership learning experience, the ELD programmes bring together emerging leaders from across the Commonwealth's five regions, and puts them together for two weeks in communities across diverse cultures, geography and locations to meet with, network and discuss issues of global significance.

The AELD is spearheaded by alumni organizations in Australia, Canada, India, Malaysia, New Zealand and the UK. The plan is an annual Dialogue to be held each year in rotation in the Pacific, Asian, Caribbean and African regions.

BasicNeeds

BasicNeeds is an international development organisation that was founded in 2000 by Chris Underhill after an initial encounter with tortured and caged mentally ill people within a hospital compound in Africa.

Mental health is hugely under-resourced and neglected as a health issue and therefore BasicNeeds works to bring about a lasting change in the lives of mentally ill people around the world.

Building Understanding through International Links for Development (BUILD)

BUILD is a network of national and international organisations united around a common purpose: namely to realise the potential of people to bring peace, prosperity and justice through twinning partnerships between communities across the globe.

BUILD's goal is to bring these partnerships into the mainstream in the UK to the point that no one can escape life without at some time being touched by an international, cross-cultural partnership whether at school, higher education, through their local authority, town or village, corporate organisations, hospital, social, arts or sports clubs, faith institutions etc.

The Commonwealth Association

The Commonwealth Association is a staff alumni association and welcomes new members. If you are a former staff member (or CFTC expert or advisor) of the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Foundation, Commonwealth of Learning, or former salaried staff of any Commonwealth association, and you want to keep in touch with the official Commonwealth and what it does, this alumni association is for you.

Commonwealth Association for Health and Disability (COMHAD)

The Commonwealth Association for Health And Disability is a Pan Commonwealth NGO supported by the Commonwealth Foundation, London and is in Official Relations with WHO. COMHAD is a long standing partner of WHO in a number of technical areas, in particular mental health, disability prevention, maternal and child health and reproductive health. It is actively involved in promoting health development, exchange of technical expertise and inter-country training and education in health in 53 commonwealth countries all over the world.

Commonwealth Association for Legislative Counsel (CALC)

CALC's object is to promote cooperation in matters of professional interest among people in the Commonwealth engaged in legislative drafting or in training people in legislative drafting. CALC has members in most parts of the Commonwealth.

Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA)

CAA is a membership organisation for professional bodies representing architects in Commonwealth countries. Formed in 1965, it currently has 34 members.

The Association is best known for its procedures for the validation of courses in architecture which convene international visiting boards to schools to assess courses against set criteria. This results in a list of qualifications recommended for recognition by members.

Under the umbrella of the Commonwealth CAA subscribes to its core values, and in particular, developmental support to the smaller and younger members. The Commonwealth network is increasingly valued as a means of accelerating improvement in the world's living conditions and to ensure a sustainable future for the planet.

Commonwealth Association of Law Reform Agencies (CALRAs)

The Commonwealth Association of Law Reform Agencies (CALRAs) assists capacity-building in law reform, and encourages international cooperation in law reform. For example, we:

- organise international conferences on law reform;
- encourage and assist the development of effective and good quality law reform methodology;
- provide training/study courses in- country, regionally and internationally; and
- review existing law reform machinery and methods in-country.

CALRAs has no paid staff and is run by volunteers.

Commonwealth Association of Museums (CAM)

The Commonwealth Association of Museums (CAM) seeks to develop the capacity of museum workers and museums to inspire and shape people's lives. Recognising that the plurality of the Commonwealth is its strength, CAM is committed to equal

opportunity for all, respect for difference, and engaging diverse communities. CAM works collaboratively to foster links between museums and members of the museum profession and between museums and their diverse communities. CAM promotes a high standard of museum activity in the Commonwealth, encourages life-long learning, assists in professional development and training, and facilitates the dissemination of knowledge and information on all professional matters.

Commonwealth Association of Paediatrics Gastroenterology and Nutrition (CAPGAN)

CAPGAN is the Commonwealth professional and scientific association of paediatricians which aims to promote the knowledge of, and training in, paediatric gastroenterology, hepatology and nutrition throughout the Commonwealth, especially amongst developing countries.

CAPGAN seeks to foster collaborative research in these fields, hold regular scientific meetings and be a source of authoritative advice to both national and international agencies within the Commonwealth on the problems of paediatric gastroenterology and hepatology and in particular the problems of childhood diarrhoea and malnutrition. CAPGAN exerts a positive influence as advocates for the welfare of children of the Commonwealth.

Commonwealth Association of Planners (CAP)

The Commonwealth Association of Planners seeks to focus and develop the skills of urban and regional planners across the Commonwealth to meet the challenges of urbanisation and the sustainable development of human settlements.

Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology and Mathematics Educators (CASTME)

CASTME links science, technology, engineering and mathematics educators across the Commonwealth. CASTME works in partnership to do research, support awards and scholarships, and run projects in Commonwealth countries.

Commonwealth Association of Surveying and Land Economy (CASLE)

The Commonwealth Association of Surveying and Land Economy is an association of professional institutes in Commonwealth countries covering all disciplines of surveying and land economy:- land surveying (geomatics), quantity and building surveying, valuation, estate management, development, mineral and marine resources and project management.

CASLE fosters the development of the profession in the Commonwealth, focusing on education and training, technology transfer, best practice and promoting dialogue between member institutions and others, including governments. CASLE is a member of the Habitat Professionals Forum, belongs to several international standard-setting bodies and is a member of BEPIC – the Built Environment Professions in the Commonwealth.

Commonwealth Boxing Council (CBC)

Since 1954 the Commonwealth Boxing Council in its various forms has regulated and sanctioned Commonwealth Championships.

Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network (CBW)

The Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network (CBW) works with women in business by connecting Governments and the private sector to encourage, enable and embed women's economic empowerment. This is achieved through delivering activities, initiatives, products and services focused on trade, talent and training.

Commonwealth Consortium for Education (CCE)

The Commonwealth Consortium for Education has been established by a group of education-related Commonwealth NGOs, to coordinate their efforts on behalf of Commonwealth education, to stimulate more coherence in their work and to provide a collective mechanism for interaction with ministries and official Commonwealth organisations.

Initial activities have focused on making representations to Commonwealth Governments regarding the place of education in future Commonwealth priorities and programmes at the time of the Coolom summit meeting in 2002.

Commonwealth Council for Education Administration and Management (CCEAM)

The CCEAM is an organisation dedicated to fostering cooperative and collaborative exchanges internationally amongst education leadership, administration and management professionals.

The CCEAM is affiliated to the Commonwealth Consortium for Education (CCFE), which provides a forum through which concerns of the CCEAM and its affiliated members can make representations and participate in Commonwealth activities.

Commonwealth Countries League (CCL)

The Commonwealth Countries League is a voluntary pan-Commonwealth civil society organisation. It was founded in 1925 by a group of women from many countries which make up today's Commonwealth. The objectives are to secure equality of liberties, status and opportunities between men and women and to promote mutual understanding throughout the Commonwealth. The CCL is non-party and is open to men and women from all countries. It promotes the education of girls and young women and links together women's organizations throughout the Commonwealth. In particular it raises money for its associated charity, the Commonwealth Countries League Education Fund.

Commonwealth Dental Association (CDA)

CDA is an association of dental associations, which aims to improve dental and oral

health in Commonwealth countries by raising the skills of dental professionals and increasing the awareness of oral health.

Commonwealth Engineers Council

CEC is a professional body for all engineers of the Commonwealth. Representing 45 engineering institutions in 44 countries across five continents, CEC is a truly global organisation whose aim is to advance the science, art and practice of engineering for the benefit of mankind.

Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council (CWEIC)

The Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council (CWEIC) was established in July 2014 with the support of the Commonwealth Secretariat and member Governments. It is a not-for-profit membership organisation with a remit from Commonwealth Heads of Government to promote trade, investment and the role of the private sector across the 53 member countries. The CWEIC has a small secretariat based within the Commonwealth Secretariat offices in London.

Commonwealth Forestry Association (CFA)

We work in all corners of the Commonwealth and beyond to promote the wise management of trees and forests.

We are also the home to the secretariat for the Standing Committee on Commonwealth Forests, which is comprised of representatives of all of the forest departments from throughout the Commonwealth. The committee provides a unified voice on forestry matters to governments and international meetings and organises the Commonwealth Forestry Conference, an event which takes place every four years.

Commonwealth Geographical Bureau (CGB)

We are the representative body of some 300 geography departments, units, sections and faculties within universities and higher institutes of learning in the 53 Commonwealth family of countries.

Commonwealth HIV/AIDS Action Group (CHAAG)

The CHAAG network (originally 'Para 55') was established in 2000 to promote and monitor the implementation of Paragraph 55 in the Communiqué issued at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in South Africa in 1999. Paragraph 55 called upon the Heads of Commonwealth states to give personal leadership to combating HIV/AIDS. We are a multidisciplinary group of Commonwealth Associations and Civil Society Organisations with an interest in promoting the Commonwealth response to HIV and AIDS.

Commonwealth Human Ecology Council (CHEC)

The Commonwealth Human Ecology Council (CHEC) is a UK-registered international development charity committed to pursuing sustainable solutions for the preservation and use of the planet's natural resources. Through its focus on human ecology – the relationship between ecosystems and human societies – CHEC works to create lasting improvements for local communities across the Commonwealth.

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

CHRI is an international NGO that works for the practical realisation of human rights throughout the Commonwealth. It has been headquartered in India since 1993. CHRI also has offices in Ghana and the UK.

CHRI advocates for better respect for, protection and promotion of international human rights standards and ensuring greater adherence to Commonwealth Harare principles. Issues relating to accountability and participation in governance – access to justice and access to information – are at the heart of CHRI's work. It also overviews the human rights situation in countries of the Commonwealth, looking especially at human rights defenders, compliance with international treaty obligations and monitoring the performance of Commonwealth members of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Commonwealth Journalists' Association (CJA)

The CJA, a volunteer association of journalists, was set up in 1978. Its aim is to promote free, bold and honest journalism across the Commonwealth. We want to be an organisation whose members feel engaged and supported, one which is robust in defending a free media and protecting journalists.

Commonwealth Judicial Education Association (CJEA)

The CJEA is incorporated as a charity under the laws of Nova Scotia, Canada. It was established to provide support for the creation and strengthening of national judicial education bodies; to encourage regional and pan-Commonwealth networking and exchange of human and material resources; to train core judicial education faculty; to develop programme modules for the use of all Commonwealth countries; and to design judicial education programmes to support judicial reform.

Commonwealth Lawyers Association (CLA)

CLA is a pan-Commonwealth organisation which seeks to uphold the rule of law in the Commonwealth by encouraging exchange of ideas between legal professionals, academics and students, through projects and by driving improvements in legal education. It holds a number of short events throughout the year and has a biennial conference the Commonwealth Law conference which regularly attracts over 1,000 delegates including some of the finest legal professionals in the world today to discuss issues of interest to the profession over a four day period. In 2015 the 19th Commonwealth Law Conference will be held in Glasgow on 12-16 April.

Commonwealth Legal Education Association (CLEA)

The Commonwealth Legal Education Association (CLEA) fosters and promotes high standards of legal education in the Commonwealth. Founded in 1971, it is a Commonwealth-wide body with regional Chapters and Committees in South Asia, Southern Africa, West Africa, the Caribbean and the UK. Our goal is to make legal education socially relevant and professionally useful, through Conferences, Moots, Newsletters, lecture series, curriculum development and activities for students.

Commonwealth Magistrates and Judges Association (CMJA)

The Commonwealth Magistrates' and Judges' Association is the only international organisation bringing together judicial officers in membership at all levels in the judiciary. It exists to advance the administration of the law by promoting the independence of the judiciary; to advance education in the law and administration of justice, and to disseminate information and literature on all matters of interest concerning the legal process within

the Commonwealth and to ensure good standards within the judiciary.

Commonwealth Medical Association (CMA)

The Commonwealth Medical Association was established in 1952. The Association, also known as the CMA, is a non-governmental organization and its main objective is to assist and strengthen the capacities of national medical associations (NMAs) of countries within the Commonwealth to improve the health, well-being and human rights of their countries and communities. (Technical advice and co-operation, networking, medical ethics, training, communications, Ministerial advocacy).

Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Federation (CNMF)

The purpose of the CNMF is to contribute to the improved health of citizens of the Commonwealth by fostering access to nursing education, influencing health policy, developing nursing networks and strengthening nursing leadership.

Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work (COSW)

COSW is an organisation for citizens of the Commonwealth who are interested in promoting and supporting social work and social development. It contributes a social work perspective to Commonwealth activities. It is supported by social work associations in the Commonwealth and has formal links with the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW).

Commonwealth Pharmacists Association

The purposes of the Association are to promote and disseminate the pharmaceutical sciences throughout the Commonwealth and to improve the quality and range of services offered there by professional pharmacists.

Commonwealth Trade Union Group

Commonwealth Women's Network (CWN)

The Commonwealth Women's Network (CWN) brings together women and gender focused civil society organisations from around the 53 countries of the Commonwealth. CWN mobilises greater investment in gender equality and women's empowerment. It urges Governments to make national commitment to ensure women and girls reach their full potential while improving and developing their leadership skills to create gender balance in political decision-making. CWN's agenda covers women's rights, removes stereotypical roles of women, promotes economic independence while eradicating poverty and works for a society free of violence. Women are less visible in the media than men. Equal participation and representation of women in the media is vital for democratic discourse. CWN Regional Focal Points have the experience to strengthen the network's gender equality policies and ensure the advancement of the implementation of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action.

Commonwealth Veterinary Association (CVA)

The Commonwealth Veterinary Association (CVA) is made up of the Commonwealth Veterinary Associations or approved bodies of the most Commonwealth Countries.

The Mission of the Commonwealth Veterinary Association is to promote the veterinary profession within the Commonwealth by encouraging the highest professional standards of education, ethics and service in order to advance animal health, productivity and welfare so as to improve the quality of life of all its peoples.

Commonwealth Youth Orchestra and Choir

The mission of the Commonwealth Youth Orchestra & Choir is to use music as a means of international dialogue, knowing no boundaries.

The Commonwealth Youth Orchestra & Choir brings together communities across the Commonwealth through music, transcending all cultural, political, social and economic boundaries. It does this through its pan-Commonwealth music activities and its unique education initiative – the Commonwealth Music Partnership – which unites all choirs, orchestras and music schools in the Commonwealth for exchanges and collaborations.

Corona Worldwide

Corona Worldwide was set up 65 years ago at the behest of the Government to provide information to the wives of Government officials posted to the Colonies as to the availability, or not, of household provisions, furniture, clothing, medical care and supplies, children's schooling, leisure activities, etc. Over the years autonomous Branches were set up in many countries and we still have 17 very active overseas Branches. We are a membership organisation and a registered Charity. In UK we

cater for the returnees, many of whom have lived overseas for over 30 years. Our Branches are always open to visiting Overseas members.

Council for Education in the Commonwealth (CEC)

The Council for Education in the Commonwealth (CEC), a parliament based NGO, was founded over 50 years ago, at the time of the first Commonwealth Education Ministers' Conference.

Its purpose is to create an informed public opinion on the salient issues concerning education and training in the Commonwealth and to identify appropriate ways in which Britain and the European Union can best contribute to their development.

Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award ('the Award') enables 14-24-year-olds to learn practical skills that are valuable to their personal and professional development. The Award is comprised of three levels and four sections. Participants complete all four sections at each level in order to achieve their Award. At Gold level, participants also complete a Residential Project.

Forum of Federations

The Forum of Federations is an international governance organization founded by Canada and funded by nine other partner governments – Australia, Brazil, Ethiopia, Germany, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan and Switzerland. The Forum of Federations is a learning network concerned with promoting intergovernmental learning on governance challenges in multi-level democracies. The Forum is not an advocacy organization and doesn't advocate for any particular structure of government. We provide innovative solutions to challenges posed by multi-level governance in a range of devolved, decentralized or federal countries

Institute of Certified Bookkeepers (ICB)

The Institute of Certified Bookkeepers is the largest bookkeeping institute in the world. It promotes and maintains the standards of bookkeeping as a profession through the establishment of relevant qualifications and the award of grades of membership that recognise academic attainment, working experience and competence.

Institute of Commonwealth Studies (ICS)

The Institute of Commonwealth Studies, founded in 1949, is the only postgraduate academic institution in the United Kingdom devoted to the study of the Commonwealth. It is also home to the longest-running interdisciplinary and practice-oriented human rights MA programme in the UK.

International Council of Social Welfare

International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) is the global voice of the world's working people. The ITUC's primary mission is the promotion and defence of workers' rights and interests, through international cooperation between trade unions, global campaigning and advocacy within the major global institutions. Its main areas of activity include the following: trade union and human rights; economy, society and the workplace; equality and non-discrimination; and international solidarity.

International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH)

FIDH is an international NGO defending all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It acts in the legal and political field for the creation and reinforcement of international instruments for the protection of Human Rights and for their implementation. FIDH is a federalist movement that acts through and for its national member and partner organisations.

Muslim Aid

Muslim Aid, a premier British Muslim relief and development agency, guided by the teachings of Islam, endeavours to tackle poverty and its causes by developing innovative and sustainable solutions that enable individuals and their communities to live with dignity and by supporting initiatives that promote economic and social justice.

NGOs beyond 2014

NGOs beyond 2014.org is a resource for all stakeholders in the post-2015 development agenda who are interested in sexual and reproductive health and rights, including maternal health, and young people and gender issues. It serves NGOs who are trying to ensure that these topics are strongly represented in the new SDGs. The website is run by the Commonwealth Medical Trust (Commat) and is sponsored by donors such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the International Planned Parenthood (IPPF).

Pacific Foundation for the Advancement of Women

Pacific Island Association for NGOs (PIANGO)

The Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO) is a regional network of NGO focal points or coordinating bodies known as National Liaison Units (NLUs) based in 22 Pacific Island countries and territories. PIANGO was formally established in 1991 to assist NGOs in the Pacific to initiate action, give voice to their concerns and work collaboratively with other development actors for

just and sustainable human development. PIANGO's primary role is to be a catalyst for collective action, to facilitate and support coalitions and alliances on issues of common concern, and to strengthen the influence and impact of NGO efforts in the region.

Public Media Alliance

The Public Media Alliance is the largest global association of public service broadcasters. Its members are the broadcasters that communicate daily with the 2 billion citizens of the Commonwealth. It continues to support and facilitate high standards of media production and broadcasting, including the promotion of arts, science and diversity, throughout the Commonwealth.

The Ramphal Institute

Launched in 2008, the Ramphal Institute is a not-for-profit organisation working on issues of special concern to the Commonwealth and its 53 members in the areas of social and economic policy, governance and the environment. The Institute leverages the special ties of the Commonwealth to advance and share knowledge in these fields as a means of challenging development issues with relevance to the wider world, benefiting both policy makers and the public.

Royal Agricultural Society of the Commonwealth (RASC)

To enable the interchange of ideas, information and views on the secure sustainable use of natural resources in the production of food, forest and fisheries To promote development of agriculture, forestry, aquaculture and the rural environment.

Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League

Our remit is to help ex-Service men & women who served The Crown and are now in need. We are privileged to have HRH The Prince Philip Duke of Edinburgh as our Grand President. Benevolence monies are dispensed to beneficiaries through a network of ex-Service Organisations across the Commonwealth. Such is the demand today, that in some parts of the World, the charity is unable to provide more than 20 meals a month where it aims to provide a meal a day.

Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS)

The Royal Commonwealth Society, founded in 1868, is a network of individuals and organisations committed to improving the lives and prospects of Commonwealth citizens across the world.

Through youth empowerment, education and advocacy, the Royal Commonwealth Society promotes the value and the values of the Commonwealth. We champion human rights, democracy and sustainable development across the 53 member countries which are intrinsically linked through their common history and shared values.

Royal Life-Saving Society (RLSS)

The Royal Life Saving Society is an 'umbrella' organisation working to reduce the numbers of people losing their life to drowning across the globe. We act in a leadership and partnership capacity, co-ordinating drowning prevention initiatives and activities with our Member Branches across the Commonwealth. We support our members to facilitate the development of community based drowning prevention initiatives and promote lifesaving education programmes across Commonwealth nations. We believe by creating links with like-minded groups and organisations we can truly make a difference in reducing the tragic number of people who lose their lives through drowning each year.

Royal Overseas League (ROSL)

The Royal Over-Seas League (ROSL) is a non-profit Commonwealth private members organisation, committed to supporting international understanding and friendship through social, music, arts and welfare activities.

SightSavers International

Sightsavers is an international organisation that changes lives for the long term. We work in more than 30 countries to eliminate avoidable blindness and support people with visual impairments to live independently. We do what we do because 80 per cent of blindness in the world is avoidable, and we think that's astoundingly unfair.

Soroptimist International

Soroptimist International is a global volunteer movement working together to transform the lives of women and girls. Our network of around 80,000 club members in 130 countries and territories works at a local, national and international level to educate, empower and enable opportunities for women and girls.

Sound Seekers

Sound Seekers is dedicated to helping deaf people, particularly children, in the poorest communities of the developing world. We work in partnership with local organisations and institutions to ensure we deliver sustainable and cost-effective projects that advance understanding of deaf people's needs and improve their access to health services, education, and social support, together with initiatives that enable people to avoid, or overcome, the effects of deafness.

Rotary International

We are 1.2 million neighbors, friends, and community leaders who come together to create positive, lasting change in our communities and around the world. Our differing occupations, cultures, and countries give us a unique perspective. Our shared passion for service helps us accomplish the remarkable.

The Round Table

Since its foundation in 1910, The Round Table has had a dual function. First, it is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal, *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, which now appears six times a year. The UK's oldest international affairs journal, it provides analysis and commentary on all aspects of international affairs, and is the major source for coverage of the policy issues concerning the contemporary Commonwealth and its global role. Secondly, The Round Table is a forum for Commonwealth debate and advocacy. It hosts periodic dinner and other meetings, with invited speakers, and organises seminar and conferences on a regular basis. It works closely with the Commonwealth Secretariat and Foundation and with a range of other Commonwealth organisations.

Transparency International

Our Mission is to stop corruption and promote transparency, accountability and integrity at all levels and across all sectors of society. Our Core Values are: transparency, accountability, integrity, solidarity, courage, justice and democracy.

Our Vision is a world in which government, politics, business, civil society and the daily lives of people are free of corruption.

World Alliance for Citizen Participation (CIVICUS)

World Alliance for Citizen Participation is an international alliance of members and partners which constitutes an influential network of organisations at the local, national, regional and international levels, and spans the spectrum of civil society. CIVICUS has a vision of a global community of active, engaged citizens committed to the creation of a more just and equitable world. This is based on the belief that the health of societies exists in direct proportion to the degree of balance between the state, the private sector and civil society.

World Vision International UK

World Vision is the world's largest international children's charity, working to bring real hope to millions of children in the world's hardest places.

Commonwealth Secretariat

Marlborough House, Pall Mall

London SW1Y 5HX

United Kingdom

thecommonwealth.org



The Commonwealth