

# Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan 2017/18-20/21

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Commonwealth Secretariat (hereafter referred to as ‘the Secretariat’) is an intergovernmental organisation established in 1965 with 54 member countries across the globe, bringing together 2.2 billion citizens. The Organisation promotes democracy, rule of law, human rights, good governance, social and economic development and is also a voice for small states and youth empowerment. The Secretariat work is guided by its Charter as “*Affirming our core Commonwealth principles of consensus and common action, mutual respect, inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, legitimacy, and responsiveness*”.

The Strategic Plan 2017/18 - 2020/21 continues the shared priorities of member governments agreed for eight to ten years in the Strategic Plan 2013/14 - 2016/17. The development of the current Plan benefitted from the performance feedback provided by member states, external audits, a meta-analysis of the Commonwealth Secretariat’s evaluation studies, and an independent evaluation of the previous Strategic Plan.

The Plan outlines the Secretariat’s strategy in line with the values and principles enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter. It includes mandates from the last two Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGMs).

The 2013/14 and 2017/18 Strategic Plans share three overarching goals. Both strategic frameworks identify strategic and intermediate outcomes which are tracked over the four-year strategic period.

The three goals are:

- Strong democracy, rule of law, promotion and protection of human rights and respect for diversity;
- Inclusive growth and sustainable development; and
- A well-connected and networked Commonwealth.

Six (6) strategic outcomes were defined in the Strategic Plan 2013/14 - 2016/17 with a time frame of eight (8) years. Under the current Strategic Plan 2017/18 - 2020/21 the Secretariat maintained the broad strategic direction but refined the strategic outcomes from six to five. (*see Annex 1 - Strategic Outcome Matrices*).

The four-year Strategic Plan is operationalised annually through Delivery Plans and Annual Budgets after approval by the Board of Governors. The Delivery Plans establishes a coherent organisational framework, presents a detailed plan for each programmatic and operational area, and highlights reforms in portfolio and operations management practices. The Delivery Plan includes reporting on the Strategic Results Framework (SRF) highlighting progress against annual and strategic targets set within the Strategic Plan. The Delivery Plan is implemented through projects. The Secretariat produced its first ever Delivery Plan in 2017/18, emphasising a new focus on effectiveness and efficiency.

The Strategic Results Framework is the core reference for programme planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. The programme structures draws on the Secretariat's core 'ways of working' referred to as its Secretariat's 'Impact Pathways'. The 'Impact Pathway' is defined generally as the sequences of cause and expected effect relationships that link the Secretariat's delivery to intended results. Five such pathways are identifiable across the programmes: 1.Consensus Building, Thought Leadership and Advocacy; 2.Policy and Legislative Development; 3.Institutional and Capacity Development; 4.Networking, Knowledge Generation and Sharing; and 5.Performance Management. Each 'pathway' draws on the Secretariat's experiences, specialist knowledge and competencies in delivery. Also, in each, there are theories, hypotheses and expectations of how actions taken and packaged will lead to desired results - hence the term 'impact pathways'. The inherent complexities of any development problem implies the need for a systems approach to change. Each strategic programme therefore includes project actions drawn across multiple impact pathways.

A Mid-Term Review of the current Strategic Plan, conducted in 2019 (August - October), assessed progress towards the realisation of the Intermediate Outcomes (IOs) as set out in the Strategic Results Framework (SRF) and provided clear strategic and operational recommendations to improve the Secretariat's planning, performance and results going forward. A Mid-Term Review and an evaluation of the previous Strategic Plan (2013/14-2016/17) has also been conducted. A number of programme and country evaluations were also completed over which inform the evidence base on implementation across the two strategic plan periods.

Findings and recommendations from this evaluation will inform the development of the Secretariat's next Strategic Plan 2021/22 - 2025/26.

## **2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF ASSIGNMENT**

The Strategy, Portfolio, Partnership and Digital Division (SPPDD) is commissioning an independent evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2017/18 - 2020/21 and an assessment of the cumulative performance from the previous Strategic Plan 2013/14 - 2016/17. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the Secretariat's programmes as directed by the Strategic Plan in meeting the needs of its member states.

The primary focus of the evaluation will be the current Strategic Plan period. However, the evaluation will reflect on the cumulative contribution to results from the previous Strategic Plan period. In this regard, it will cover four (4) years of the previous plan (July 2013 - June 2017) and three (3) years of the current plan (July 2017 - June 2020). It will also make recommendations from both the strategic and operational perspectives that will directly input into the Strategic Plan 2021/22 - 2025/26.

Specifically, the evaluation objectives are to:

- Assess the transition and coherence of programmes from the previous Strategic Plan 2013/14 - 2016/17 to the current Strategic Plan 2017/18 - 2020/21;

- Conduct a meta-analysis of strategic, programme and country evaluations conducted within the two strategic plan periods to assess the coverage and quality of evidence on the Secretariat's impact pathways and strategic performance;
- Review the Secretariat's 'Impact Pathway' and map programme performance in the two strategic plan periods against the pathways, identify gaps or issues on how we apply the pathways;
- Evaluate how well the strategic plan design and programmes aligned with Sustainable Development Goals and allow for adaption to changes in the global context and priorities of Member States;
- Assess the extent to which Commonwealth member states may have benefited from the Secretariat's work and tangible outcomes realised;
- Assess the extent to which gender mainstreaming was enabled and realised as well as lessons learnt through the two strategic plan periods;
- Identify issues, challenges and lessons and make recommendations for the development of the next Strategic Plan (2021/22 - 2025/26).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This evaluation is both summative and formative as the Secretariat is keen to identify what works and for whom in order to inform improvements. The evaluation will be utilisation focused, seeking to engage stakeholders and partners in order to ensure that the outcomes inform the strategic planning phase that has already commenced. The Consultant(s) should include the following in their methodology:

- Conduct a meta-analysis of strategic, programme and country evaluations in the two strategic plan periods;
- Review of all pertinent records and data related to the Strategic Plan design and implementation, monitoring and reporting, including Six Monthly Progress reports, Annual Results Reports, Mid-Term Review Reports, Secretary-General's reports to CHOGM, and internal and external audit reviews;
- Review member country and external reviews of the Secretariat's performance during the period, including governance reviews and bilateral aid reviews;
- Conduct focussed evaluative reflection sessions focussed on learning with programme teams in the Commonwealth Secretariat engaged in the delivery of the Strategic Plan;
- Conduct consultations with key stakeholders including High Commissioners, governments, programme partners, collaborating institutions, and consultants.

### **4. TIMEFRAME AND DELIVERABLES**

The study is planned during the period December 2020 - June 2021. It is estimated that 120 consultant days will be needed to complete the study. Due to COVID-19, no travel is envisaged during this assignment. However, should any face to face be considered necessary later along the assignment, this will be agreed upon and the Secretariat will reimburse any costs to the Consultant(s) in line with the Secretariat's Travel Policy.

The Evaluation will provide the following deliverables to the Secretariat:

- Inception report with the Evaluation framework, work plan, methodology and draft templates for all necessary evaluation tools;
- Draft Evaluation report;
- Validation seminar/ presentation on the Evaluation findings and recommendations;
- Final Evaluation report, incorporating all feedback/ comments received on the draft report and during the dissemination seminar.
- Raw and secondary data sets used in the production of the report, especially if surveys and external data are part of the methodology.

The deliverables must be submitted to SPPDD electronically as a Microsoft Word document. The inception report is due within two weeks after the initial meetings with the Secretariat staff and the review of literature. Following the presentation of the Evaluation findings at a seminar at the Secretariat and receipt of feedback comments from the Secretariat and other stakeholders on the draft report, the consultant(s) is/are expected to submit a revised final Evaluation report within two weeks. The draft (and final) Evaluation reports must be no more than 75 pages, excluding all annexes. The copyright of the Evaluation Report shall belong to the Commonwealth Secretariat, however, consultants may be contacted to provide input to the final copy-editing phase.

## **5. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

The evaluation will be managed by the Evaluation team of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Evaluators will report operationally on progress to the Head of Evaluation. The Senior Management Committee of the Secretariat will provide oversight to the evaluation and will validate the final products.

A *Programme Steering Group* (PSG) will be constituted to include project leads from within each of the five strategic outcomes.

The Evaluation's engagement with the Steering Committee will improve ownership of and accountability for the results of the evaluation. Members will serve in an advisory capacity; their main responsibilities will be the following:

- Ensure that adequate support, input and feedback is provided in each phase of the evaluation (TOR development; Inception; Drafting; Validation; Finalisation; Dissemination and Utilisation);
- Facilitate access to key documents and contacts for potential interviewees;
- Participate in the validation workshop on findings and conclusions and assist in the finalisation of recommendations;

## **6. CONSULTANCY REQUIREMENTS**

The consultant(s)/ consultancy team should demonstrate the following:

- Substantive knowledge and experience in undertaking meta-reviews, evaluations and critical research, including of international organisations, with a minimum of 10 years' experience;
- Knowledge and experience of strategic plan design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- Experience engaging with and delivering report outputs to high-level government representatives.
- In-depth knowledge of RBM approaches in the context of international organizations and particularly in the work streams of multi-lateral organisations
- Ability to handle and analyse big datasets, and conduct multi country reviews;
- Excellent communication skills, both spoken and written English, including experience in the production of clear and concise reports for international/inter-governmental institutions, and delivery of messages to a diversified audience;
- Good understanding of the work of multilateral organisations, especially the Commonwealth; and,
- Familiarity with the Sustainable Development Goals and the international governance architecture.

## **7. COVID-19**

The current global pandemic has transformed work in recent weeks and disrupted the travel components of plans. Evaluation planning, like most areas of work, is significantly affected and the timeline to a return to 'business-as-usual' is still unknown. With this in mind, prospective applicants are asked to ensure that their team compositions and remote working technologies are geared to support the completion of this evaluation without travel. Applicants are encouraged to reflect their adjustments in their proposed approaches and methodologies as part of their responses to the TORS and to raise any concerns or risks they foresee. Should the current travel restrictions be lifted, allowing for safe travel and in-person engagements, consultants are asked to retain flexibility to undertake such activities as may add value to the evaluation.

## **8. EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW**

As part of the quality assessment of the Secretariat's evaluations, this evaluation will be peer reviewed by at least two External Peer Reviewers. Evaluators will be expected to review the final report incorporating the comments from the Peer Reviewers. An opportunity will also be provided for engagement with the peer reviewers upon receipt and review of Peer Reviewers comments by the Evaluators.

## Annex 1: Strategic Plan Outcome Matrices

Diagram 1: 2013/14 - 2016/17 Strategic Plan Overview REVISED,

Goals						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong democracy, rule of law, promotion and protection of human rights and respect for diversity</li> <li>Inclusive growth and sustainable development</li> <li>A well-connected and networked Commonwealth</li> </ul>						
	Democracy	Public institutions	Social Development	Youth	Development: pan-Commonwealth	Development: small states and vulnerable states
Strategic Outcomes	1. Greater adherence to Commonwealth political values and principles	2. More effective, efficient and equitable public governance	3. Enhanced positive impact of social development	4. Youth more integrated and valued in political and development processes	5. More inclusive economic growth and sustainable development	6. Strengthened resilience of small states and vulnerable states
Intermediate Outcomes	<p>1.1 CMAG is well-informed and supported to protect and promote Commonwealth values and principles</p> <p>1.2 Member states engage with and benefit from strengthened Good Offices of the Secretary-General</p> <p>1.3 Member states conduct fair, credible and inclusive elections</p> <p>1.4 Values of 'respect and understanding' advanced</p>	<p>2.1 Effective institutions and mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights</p> <p>2.2 Improved and constructive engagement of member states in the UN's UPR process through technical assistance</p> <p>2.3 Effective mechanisms ensuring the autonomous and harmonious operation of the three branches of government and strengthen the independence of the judiciary</p> <p>2.4 National institutions effectively facilitating the administration and delivery of the rule of law and justice</p> <p>2.5 merged with 2.3</p> <p>2.6 Improved public administration</p>	<p>3.1 Strengthened national frameworks and policies improve health outcomes</p> <p>3.2 Strengthened national policies and frameworks improve education outcomes</p> <p>3.3. Gender equality and the empowerment of women effectively mainstreamed into member state policies, frameworks and programmes and Secretariat's projects</p> <p>3.4 Improved capacity building for social development</p>	<p>4.1 National and pan-Commonwealth frameworks advance social, political and economic empowerment of young people</p> <p>4.2 Young people empowered and supported to participate meaningfully and to take forward youth-led initiatives</p>	<p>5.1 Effective policy mechanisms for integration and participation in the global trading system</p> <p>5.2 Commonwealth principles and values advanced in global development and financing decisions (e.g. G20 and post-2015 MDG framework)</p> <p>5.3 National frameworks facilitate effective debt management</p> <p>5.4 Effective, equitable, transparent and sustainable management of marine and other natural resources</p>	<p>6.1 International policies, mechanisms and rules are more responsive to small states' development strategies and resilience needs</p> <p>6.2 Small states enabled to effectively participate in international decision-making processes</p> <p>6.3 Improved climate financing frameworks</p>
Enabling outcomes						
<p>I. Global advocacy: international declarations, resolutions and other commitments on democracy, development and diversity include Commonwealth perspective</p> <p>II. Technical assistance, referral and partnership mechanisms respond flexibly to member states' needs and capacity building priorities</p> <p>III. Commonwealth profile: profile of the Commonwealth is strengthened at all levels</p> <p>IV. Knowledge management and exchange leads to sharing of good practices and strengthened Commonwealth network (Formerly 5.5)</p>						
Internal outcomes						
<b>Human resources</b> <i>The recruitment and retention of a diverse, engaged and high-performing workforce to facilitate the effective delivery of the Strategic Plan</i>		<b>Financial and non-financial corporate services</b> <i>Efficient and effective delivery of corporate services</i>			<b>Quality and results</b> <i>Effective planning, quality assurance and ME&amp;R system to facilitate the delivery and reporting of the Strategic Plan</i>	

Strategic Plan 2017/18 - 2020/21 OUTCOMES MATRIX					
<b>Goals</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong democracy, rule of law, promotion and protection of human rights and respect for diversity</li> <li>• Inclusive growth and sustainable development</li> <li>• A well-connected and networked Commonwealth</li> </ul>					
	Democracy (Peace)	Public institutions (Peace,)	Youth and Social Development (People)	Economic Development (Prosperity)	Small and Vulnerable States (Planet)
Strategic Outcomes	1. Greater adherence to Commonwealth political values and principles	2. More effective, efficient and equitable public governance	3. People of the Commonwealth fulfil their potential with dignity and equality in a healthy environment	4. More inclusive economic growth and sustainable development	5. Strengthened resilience of small and vulnerable states, including adaptation and mitigation against climate change
Intermediate Outcomes	1.1 CMAG is well-informed and supported to protect and promote Commonwealth values and principles  1.2 Member states engaged with and benefit from strengthened Good Offices of the Secretary-General  1.3 Member states conduct fair, credible and inclusive elections  1.4 Strengthened mechanisms of civil paths to peace in member states to counter violent extremism	2.1 Human Rights promoted and protected, and participation in the UN's UPR process improved  2.2 Rule of law strengthened and access to justice ensured for all  2.3 Improved public administration for good governance, and the prevention of corruption	3.1 Young people engaged and empowered to meaningfully participate in political and development processes  3.2 Sports contributes to sustainable development, health, and peaceful and just societies  3.3 Strengthened sustainable policies reduce disparities and improve health and education outcomes  3.4 Women, girls and other vulnerable groups empowered and protected against violence and harmful practices	4.1 Effective mechanisms for increased trade, employment and business growth  4.2 Commonwealth positions, advanced in international development and financing mechanisms  4.3 National frameworks facilitate effective debt management  4.4 Sustainable development of marine, other natural resources, including 'blue economies'	5.1 International policies, mechanisms and rules are more responsive to small states' development strategies and resilience needs  5.2 Increased resilience, adaptation and mitigation against climate change  5.3 Improved access to climate financing
<b>Cross-cutting Outcomes</b>					
V. <b>Partnerships and Innovation:</b> Strengthened partnerships and innovations to support member countries and Commonwealth organisations VI. <b>Gender Mainstreaming:</b> Gender equality and the empowerment of women integrated in the Secretariat's policies, frameworks, programmes and projects VII. <b>Consensus Building:</b> Member states achieve consensus and advance key priority issues					

