

The Commonwealth: Supporting the Implementation of the SDG's at all levels. Remarks delivered by Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General Dr Josephine Ojiambo, on 19 June 2015 in Gaborone, Botswana

Vice President of Botswana, Your Excellency Masisi

Prime Minister of Malta, Hon. Dr Joseph Muscat

Vice President of Kiribati, Hon. Ms Teima Onorio

Chairman of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, Mayor
Lawrence Yule

Secretary General of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, Carl
Wright

Ministers

High Commissioners

Former Deputy Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Secretariat,
Madame Mwamba

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A pleasant good morning to you all. We are pleased to be in Botswana among friends.

The Commonwealth Secretariat celebrates with you in acknowledging the 20th anniversary of CLGF and your achievements in support of local democracy and local government.

I bring warm greetings from Commonwealth Secretary-General, Kamallesh Sharma who unfortunately could not be here. I am pleased to deliver remarks on his behalf, at this important Commonwealth Local Government Forum meeting. This year is monumental in the international quest to advance major developmental processes. Next month in Addis Ababa, will see a global discussion on Financing the new Sustainable Development agenda. In September in New York, we expect the Sustainable Goals to be adopted; In November in Malta, Prime Minister Hon. Dr Joseph Muscat will host the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, under the theme “ADDING GLOBAL VALUE”. These are perfect opportunities for the Commonwealth to agree on, and provide global leadership on the operationalisation of the sustainable development goals; The CHOGM Outcomes will dovetail the Global Climate Change Summit in December later this year.

It is expected that these international forums will set the international agenda on a new course towards 2030. Together, let's seize the efforts for the Commonwealth to be at the forefront of international endeavour.

At the Commonwealth 2013 Heads of Government Meeting in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Commonwealth Heads of Governments agreed that the new development agenda should strive to “leave no-one behind” and

emphasised the need for the Post-2015 Development Agenda to reflect the Commonwealth's values, as articulated in the Commonwealth Charter.

Our Heads did not just iterate this aspiration - they subsequently met and tabled a Commonwealth Statement on the Post-2015 Development Agenda at the United Nations General Assembly last year. It was the first of many actions that demonstrated the Commonwealth's commitment to supporting and engaging with the sustainable development goals agenda. Their commitment also rallied all Commonwealth delegations to sing from the same song sheet, allowing our member states to negotiate with their national perspectives and those of the Commonwealth family in mind.

The Commonwealth Secretariat was established by Heads of Governments fifty years ago, and is the vehicle that forges and resonates with the political will to support the democratic and development objectives of our member states and our peoples. The depth and breadth of the Commonwealth is augmented by the mandates of wider associated and accredited organisations. The Secretariat's current strategic plan places fresh emphasis on working in close collaboration with associated organisations across a range of activities, including attendance at international and regional summits. By strategically partnering with like-minded bodies such as the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, the Commonwealth's effort has greater impact on accelerating the implementation of the sustainable development goals.

This is why in July, when the Secretariat team heads to Addis Ababa for the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the team

will be joined will by a contingent from the CLGF and the group will participate as one 'Commonwealth' delegation.

At the 2011 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Perth, Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II said the following in her speech about the Commonwealth:

“We should not forget that this is an association not only of governments but also of peoples. That is what makes it so relevant in this age”.

We must never forget that the essence of Commonwealth values is about improving and enhancing the lived experiences of its people. The Commonwealth is committed to be bold about reinforcing its values and supporting the sustainable development goals.

Indeed, the Commonwealth Secretariat has a long experience in supporting our members to improve governance and service delivery. We work with ministries, local authorities, constitutional bodies, and we are increasingly partnering through international civil society organizations to strengthen national institutions and build local capacity. It is this local experience that the Commonwealth Secretariat values to strengthen and maximize our soft power.

Allow me to share some examples of how the Secretariat's work will further support the implementation of the sustainable development goals and maximize of soft power. I articulate these undertakings with a view that going forward, we can collectively identify key areas for greater impact -

with many of you as our local government partners. Further, I trust it will help us as the Commonwealth family, to further strategically situate ourselves for the upcoming global discussions later this year. The Secretariat is supporting the efforts of incoming Chair of the Commonwealth, Prime Minister Muscat, to mobilise the Commonwealth family in the attainment the post-2015 agenda and beyond.

Public Service

The objectives of our work in public service governance are to strengthen the legitimacy of government by improving the manner in which services are delivered to benefit citizens. By so doing, we incrementally assist to increase the public's TRUST in government, including local government.

Democracy provides for a stable government, a parliament, an executive, and public institutions.

FINANCE

In our efforts to support the alleviation of poverty, the Commonwealth is gearing up to expand its body of work on mechanisms for efficiently accessing innovative sources of finance, and has planned a side event at the July Financing for Development Conference, which will focus specifically on the development potential of *crowdfunding*. Crowdfunding is a form of project fundraising, which involves raising small amounts of money from a large number of contributors, typically via the Internet. It has a huge potential to assist both the public and the private sector in developing countries in leapfrogging traditional finance systems and accumulating capital for much needed development projects and infrastructure. Local-

level government agencies have already started to take advantage of associated innovative mechanisms for funding development.

We have also recently developed a practical toolkit to comprehensively document all financing for development sources in one place and assess them against a set of Commonwealth-developed effective finance principles. The toolkit is aimed at helping policy-makers to navigate the innovative financing for development landscape and to match mechanisms and sources of finance to achieve development goals.

SMALL STATES

Another example, on how the Commonwealth Secretariat has been mobilising our member states to make a big impact in this year's global processes can be seen in our efforts on small states. It is anticipated that a Small States Centre to be located in Malta will be a tremendous resource to assist Commonwealth small states to accelerate aspects of goal 11. Goal 11 promotes inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable human settlements.

The Commonwealth successfully convened a Conference on Financing for Development in Small States in Barbados in March 2015. Delegates at the conference agreed on four common priorities for small states that should be reflected in the final financing for development framework. These are: 1) Debt sustainability; 2) Climate change financing; 3) International acknowledgement of the vulnerability of small states; 4) Capacity building.

CITIES

Even as we engage the issue of small states, we recognise the role of urbanisation and cities as engines for sustainable growth and innovation.

TRADE

In a few days, the first Commonwealth Trade Symposium will be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, 23-24 June 2015. This will include a dedicated panel session on the role of trade within the post-2015 agenda and new global partnership for development. Trade is a cross cutting issue in the Sustainable Development Goals. We await the outcomes of that conference as we mobilise for serious action and Commonwealth impact on sustainable goal eight, which promotes sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

HEALTH

In supporting Goal 3, which promotes healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages, the Commonwealth is currently facilitating knowledge sharing, innovation and collaborative working across the Commonwealth through the creation of a vibrant online health hub.

Additionally, our priority policy areas include establishing strategic partnerships to strengthen national health systems for Universal Health Coverage and to address non-communicable diseases.

EDUCATION

In education, our priority areas are developing frameworks to set academic and professional standards for teachers and school leaders. We are also

encouraging knowledge sharing, innovation and collaborative working across the Commonwealth via the online platform called the Education Hub.

POLITICAL

Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals aspires to “*Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*”. This encompasses much of the Commonwealth’s political work.

While democracy and governance around the Commonwealth take varied forms, we all commit ourselves to certain common values and principles. These shape our collective goals and responsibilities. These include free and fair elections, the protection of human rights, the rule of law, separation of powers, tolerance, and respect and understanding for all. Deep-rooted in the Commonwealth approach are the ideals of peer support and learning from one another. That is what Commonwealth conferences like this one are all about: to strengthen networks, to share, to exchange, to be mutually supportive, and to develop stratagem to achieve our mutual objectives.

The special appeal of local governance is that it derives its relevance directly from the participation of peoples at community and sub-national levels. The Commonwealth Secretariat values this rich resource that offers for dynamic impact at the community level.

We welcome the close collaboration and support of the CLGF and its membership in the observation of local and national elections over the years, in a range of countries, most recently in elections in Guyana last

month. Since 1991, the Secretariat has sent over 130 Observer Groups to elections in member states, and election observation has become one of the Commonwealth's acknowledged brand strengths.

One of our innovative pilot projects is the development of community based dispute resolution mechanisms to support election management bodies. This has been piloted and we will shortly be publishing a manual of the model - which can be used by our member states to develop similar helpful structures as they may find appropriate.

GENDER

Local Government is a significant entry point for women into political leadership. The Secretariat has embarked on pilot projects to enhance the potential of women in political, technical and business leadership.

YOUTH

Working with our Member Governments, the Secretariat is advocating for youth as a cross-cutting thematic issue in the discussion and implementation of the sustainable development goals. With only 6 of 169 targets specifically recognising young people, and only one (1) of those identifying young people's capacity as actors in development - our members are of the view that this can be improved. It is not too late for member governments to champion youth focussed financing. At the November CHOGM in Malta, there will be a Commonwealth Youth Forum.

RADICALISATION

The issue of youth radicalisation has been raised as a concern by many member states. It will be important to seek our leaders reflections on this issue at CHOGM in November. The Commonwealth's Civil Paths to Peace report, provides a solid foundation on which related issues were discussed across the Commonwealth. The use of soft power by the Commonwealth to support work on social cohesion and inclusion, education, and resocialisation, are forward thinking ideas to create greater in social inclusion of youth that we are considering going forward. The Youth and People's Forum will provide perspectives on this issue to feed into the 2015 Heads of Government Meeting.

COMMONWEALTH MECHANISM TO SUPPORT THE SDG'S?

Thoughts currently abound on the setting up of a task force or steering group mechanism to ensure that Commonwealth member states act in concert to accelerate the implementation of the SDG's. Such a mechanism could be launched in CHOGM and would report regularly to the Chair in Office on progress made overtime. We share this as food for thought.

CONCLUSION

The post-2015 agenda is an enormous opportunity to finish the unfinished business of the MDGs and accelerate inclusive and sustainable development for Commonwealth citizens. Through our support to Member States and indeed through conceptualising strategic partnerships with other bodies, and indeed, with local government partners, the Commonwealth is committed to doing its part to deliver on an ambitious agenda which will improve the lives of people everywhere.