

Eleventh Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting

*"Gender Equality through Sustainable Development in
An Inclusive Commonwealth"*

Apia, Samoa, 7 - 8 September 2016

APIA COMMUNIQUÉ 2016

Commonwealth Secretariat
Apia
8 September 2016

The 11th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (11WAMM) was held in Apia, Samoa, 7-8 September 2016. Delegations from 14 member countries attended the meeting.

The opening ceremony was addressed by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa, Honourable Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, and the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Rt. Honourable Patricia Scotland. The meeting was chaired by Hon Faimalotoa Kika Iemaima Stowers, Minister for Women, Community and Social Development (Samoa). The keynote address at the opening of the business meeting, was made by Her Excellency, Ambassador Natasha Stott Despoja AM (Australia).

Theme of the meeting was "Gender Equality through Sustainable Development in an Inclusive Commonwealth".

11WAMM took place almost a year after the adoption by the Commonwealth member states and the rest of the world of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the Paris Agreement at COP21. In pursuance of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, Ministers reiterated that realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is critical and will make an essential contribution to progress across all the 17 SDGs and 169 targets. They also noted the importance of systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is crucial.

11WAMM focused on the contribution that the Commonwealth can make towards the achievement of the SDGs, with an emphasis on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment across the 2030 Agenda.

1. Ministers noted the 2015 Commonwealth Heads of Government Malta Communiqué, reaffirming that **gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls** should be mainstreamed into development, and reaffirmed their commitment to prioritising the issue in line with **the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and within the work of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

2. Ministers welcomed the **Report from Senior Officials** and noted the recommendations in the report of the End Term Review (ETR) of the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender Equality 2005-2015 (known as the PoA). They further noted the importance of the ETR in informing the future direction of Commonwealth's priorities on gender equality.

3. Ministers welcomed the establishment of the Commonwealth Women's Forum (Malta, November, 2015), acknowledged the contribution made by the Forum, the Women Leaders' Summit (London, July, 2016) and the National Women's Machineries in the determination of the next Commonwealth priorities on gender equality and empowerment.

4. Ministers agreed to four priority areas for action:

- (i) Women's economic empowerment;
- (ii) Women in leadership;
- (iii) Ending violence against women and girls; and
- (iv) Gender and climate change.

5. Ministers agreed that the implementation of the four priorities may vary for different member governments and requested the Secretariat coordinate with member governments to identify their focus areas.
6. Ministers requested that the Commonwealth Secretariat provides an Implementation Strategy for 2017-2020 and develop a monitoring and evaluation mechanism that uses the reporting framework of the SDGs.
7. Ministers acknowledged the importance of accurate timely data and information, as well as clear targets, to underpin evidence based policy and monitoring.
8. Ministers recognised the critical importance of economic empowerment of women to the delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and called for equitable access to resources for example land, property rights, information communication technology and finance.
9. Ministers agreed to continue the advocacy for increased numbers and effective participation of women in leadership at all levels of decision making in the private and public sectors.
10. Ministers welcomed the continuing efforts to end violence against women and girls, including the prevention and elimination of child, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation and other harmful traditional practices. They noted studies which estimate the costs of violence against women/gender based violence (GBV) are essential. These results can be factored into national macro-economic assessments and policies.
11. Ministers acknowledged and recognised the disproportionate impact of climate change on women and girls and committed to engage in mitigation and adaptation initiatives, including disaster preparedness, response, recovery and related measures to build resilience in Commonwealth countries.
12. Ministers confirmed the importance of strong legal frameworks to prevent discrimination against women and girls including the incorporation of international agreements into domestic regulatory frameworks and policies.
13. Ministers welcomed the launch of two publications prepared by the Commonwealth Secretariat - *Advancing Gender Equality-Case Studies from Across the Commonwealth* and the *Judicial Bench Book on violence against women in East Africa*, and recognised the importance of working in partnership with the judiciary across the Commonwealth to enhance best practices.
14. Ministers noted the best practices and lessons learnt of Commonwealth partners to promote gender equality and encouraged development partners and member countries to build on existing successful partnerships, as well as to launch innovative new ones, to advance gender equality and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

15. Ministers committed to the principle of inclusion and recognised the importance of working with all groups, including civil society and private sector, in their efforts to implement commitments to gender equality at all levels.

16. Ministers noted the importance of utilising all available resources for implementation of agreed priorities. They acknowledged the importance of engaging with national, regional, and international partners to mobilise and leverage resources to support member states' efforts to promote gender equality.

17. Ministers thanked the Government of Samoa for successfully hosting 11WAMM. Ministers welcomed and confirmed Kenya as the host of 12WAMM in 2019.

8 September 2016
Apia, Samoa