



Communique

**1st Africa Region Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting
8-10 February 2015 | Yaoundé, Cameroon**

‘Young People Building a Stable and Sustainable Future’

1. The first Africa Region Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting (AR-CYMM) was held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on 8-10 February 2015.
2. Delegations from 15 member countries attended the AR-CYMM, of which ten were led at ministerial level. Delegates included Ministers, senior government officials and youth representatives from Commonwealth countries of the Africa region, as well as youth development stakeholders and experts.
3. The timing of the AR-CYMM, occurring just a few months before world leaders agree the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2015-2030 at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), gave delegates the opportunity to reflect on the negotiations process for the SDGs in the context of youth development priorities for Africa.
4. In recognition of the important role of young people as partners in building a stable and sustainable future, delegates considered recommendations submitted by the Young Leaders Forum of the AR-CYMM, particularly on gender equality, peace and security, and health and wellbeing of young people.

Youth in the Post-2015 Development Agenda

5. Youth ministers shared national progress and impediments related to the key resolutions adopted at the 8th Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting (8CYMM) in Papua New Guinea in 2013, aimed at ensuring strong recognition of young people in the post-2015 development agenda.
6. Youth Ministers reinforced their commitment to the resolutions agreed at 8CYMM in 2013, including to:
 - Take steps to integrate young people in the design and implementation of national youth policies and action plans;
 - Develop and prioritise the implementation of national youth mainstreaming strategies;
7. Ministers resolved to take action to advocate for stronger recognition of young people in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. They agreed to protect existing youth-specific targets in the draft SDGs, and to promote the inclusion of additional youth targets, which are crucial to member countries in the region. Specifically, ministers agreed to advocate for the inclusion of the following

targets:

- Ensure that all young people have access to opportunities to participate effectively in peace-building and the civic life of their societies, and in decision-making and monitoring across all sectors of national development.
 - Ensure universal access to information and communication technology, and achievement of targeted outcomes in education, health care, social cohesion, training and employment opportunities among the youth, through greater use of ICT.
 - Ensure young people have opportunities for sustained participation, ownership and leadership in local, regional and international mechanisms to prevent, manage and resolve conflict and maintain peace.
 - Ensure early detection, treatment of and support for mental health issues and promote universal healthcare and education on sexual health and reproductive rights among adolescents and youth.
 - Ensure equal access for young women to all employment opportunities, and encourage their participation in traditionally male-dominated professions.
8. Ministers also supported the call by youth leaders for a youth monitoring mechanism for the SDGs, including the disaggregation of data, and analysis using the Commonwealth Youth Development Index.

Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship

9. Ministers noted the emergence of a policy guide on youth entrepreneurship, developed by the Commonwealth Secretariat in partnership with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and expressed interest in the potential for related technical assistance.
10. Ministers noted the achievements of the youth-led Commonwealth Asia Alliance of Young Entrepreneurs (CAAYE), and agreed to support the replication of the CAAYE model in the Africa region, mandated by Heads of Government in Sri Lanka in 2013, noting that such a network would help lift economic growth and youth employment in member countries. Ministers further agreed to support youth entrepreneurship by facilitating easier access to technology and finance for young people, particularly those unable to furnish collateral.
11. Ministers emphasised the need to prioritise the engagement of young people in agriculture and the importance of integrating entrepreneurship education and training in school and university curricula.

12. Ministers endorsed the youth call to aim for a reduction in youth unemployment, and reiterated their commitment to the Africa Union rate of reduction of 2% annually.
13. Ministers agreed to ensure that bids by youth-owned enterprises are given more serious consideration in government procurement processes, through the establishment of mechanisms such as quotas.

Youth Participation and Civic Education

14. Ministers reflected on existing and planned mechanisms for youth participation in decision-making processes and explored enhanced approaches to youth engagement and participation, with a particular focus on peace-building. Ministers endorsed the principles outlined in the *Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peace-building* and committed to using the principles where relevant to guide programme design and delivery.
15. Ministers recommended that the Commonwealth Youth Programme should include work on building inter-generational respect, understanding and constructive collaboration.
16. Ministers resolved to support young people to take a key role in disaster relief and recovery in times of crisis and natural disaster. Ministers expressed their support for, and solidarity with, Sierra Leone, and commended the remarkable work being done by young people there in the face of the Ebola crisis.
17. Ministers agreed to commit to clear, collaborative paths of action to deal with terrorism and other forces that are preventing peace, and therefore development, in Africa, in partnership with, and for the sake of young people.
18. Ministers agreed that young people should be seen as an opportunity and a resource, not as a threat, and that investment in youth development is critical to meaningful, constructive, intergenerational collaboration.
19. Ministers committed to enhancing youth participation in decision-making, as well as the design, implementation and monitoring of programmes, by taking steps to include targets for youth representation, through legitimate structures, in relevant governance and decision-making structures at national and international levels.
20. Ministers commended the work of the Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC), and the commitment and expertise shown by the youth delegates to the AR-CYMM. Ministers further called for greater intergenerational understanding and collaboration between youth leaders and decision makers.
21. Ministers noted the resource constraints faced by youth-led organisations such as National Youth Councils and student associations, and agreed to provide greater support for building their capacity through legislation, financial assistance and/or other measures. They noted that this work can and should

be supported by the CYC and the Commonwealth Students Association, working in partnership with the Pan-Africa Youth Union.

Youth Policy Frameworks and Action Plans

22. Ministers agreed to strengthen the development of national youth policies that are inclusive of, and relevant to, young people's needs and capabilities and prioritise action and resources to ensure meaningful implementation.
23. Ministers noted the challenges of an increasingly complex environment of regional and global youth policy frameworks, and the expiry of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (2007-2015). Ministers endorsed the Commonwealth's proposal to explore harmonisation of the multiple policy frameworks, and agreed to provide input to the process.
24. Ministers resolved to strengthen efforts to monitor and evaluate youth policies, and to track progress in youth development with the help of regular reporting and tools such as the Commonwealth Youth Development Index.

Youth Work Professionalisation

25. Ministers reinforced their commitment to youth work as an essential component of the enabling environment that underpins effective youth development. Ministers also committed to implementing the mandate by the Commonwealth Heads of Government for the professionalisation of youth work and the recognition of youth workers at the national level, through mechanisms such as Commonwealth Youth Work Week and the Commonwealth Youth Worker Awards.
26. Ministers noted the importance of education and training for youth workers and agreed to facilitate and support youth work education across the Commonwealth, including engagement with the emerging Commonwealth consortium for a bachelor's degree in youth development work. Ministers recommended additional engagement with ministries of education and the University Council of the Africa Union.
27. Ministers took note of the main challenges facing youth workers in the region and agreed to better support the contribution of youth workers.
28. Ministers expressed their appreciation to the Government and the people of the Republic of Cameroon for their hospitality in hosting the AR-CYMM, and the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Youth Council and the National Youth Council of Cameroon for the organisation of the event.
