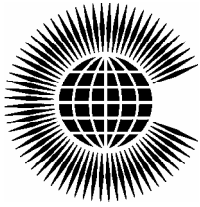


Commonwealth Secretariat



Consultation of Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers

Helmsley Hotel, 212 East 42nd Street, New York
26 February 2006

In preparation for the 8th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (8WAMM), being held in Uganda in June 2007

Background Note

Objectives

The Commonwealth Secretariat's Social Transformation Programmes Division (Gender Section) is organising the Consultation of Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers which is being held on the eve of the 50th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), on 26 February 2006 in New York.

The key objectives of the meeting are:

- To plan the 8th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (8WAMM), to be held in Uganda in 2007;
- To report on the implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015, the Commonwealth Secretariat's Gender Audit and the first meeting of the Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group;
- To provide a forum for discussion and sharing of experiences on "Women in Decision-Making at All Levels"; and
- To strengthen the Commonwealth's participation in the 50th Session of the CSW.

Attendance

The meeting will bring together a rich mix of policy-makers and gender advocates from around the Commonwealth and globally. The 53 Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers and Heads of National Women's Machineries have been invited to attend the meeting. Participants will also include international, regional and bilateral partner agencies, and civil society organisations. In addition, representatives of Commonwealth Associations and Commonwealth Secretariat staff will bring the total number of participants up to some 100+.

Chairperson

The Ugandan Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Hon Zoe Bakoko Bakoru, has kindly accepted to chair the meeting, as host of 8WAMM which will be held in Uganda in 2007.

Programme and Format

The Consultation of Women's Affairs Ministers being held in New York will be held from 0830 to 1700 on Sunday 26 February 2006. As set out in the attached agenda, the

programme has been divided into three informative and participatory sessions.

The first session (before the morning tea/coffee break) will feature brief welcoming remarks by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Chairperson. The keynote address, which will be delivered by Ms. Rachel Mayanja, UN Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, will focus on “Opportunities and threats to the international gender equality agenda presented by current UN reforms, in the context of the CSW Workplan 2007 - 2011”. It will also highlight the status of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

In the *first session*, the Commonwealth Secretariat will also report on the implementation of the Plan of Action on Gender Equality 2005-2015, and on the Secretariat’s Gender Audit which is currently being undertaken.

In the *second session* (between the morning tea/coffee break and lunch), the Commonwealth PoA Monitoring Group will present a report of its first meeting, which will have been held on 25 February 2006 in New York, prior to the Ministers’ Consultation. The PoA Monitoring Group is expected to report on its deliberations on the following:

- Harmonisation of Commonwealth and international priorities, workplans and reporting on gender equality
- Process of developing Gender-sensitive Indicators for monitoring PoA implementation
- Modalities for the functioning of the PoA Monitoring Group
- Rotation of membership of the PoA Monitoring Group

The *second session* will also include planning of the 8th Commonwealth Women’s Affairs Ministers Meeting (8WAMM), to be held in 2007 in Uganda. The session will take the form of regional caucuses, which will report back in plenary after the lunch break. 8WAMM is of strategic importance since the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) is also being held in Uganda in November 2007. Bearing the above in mind, the meeting will discuss and agree on the dates and venue, theme, objectives, agenda, structure and process of 8WAMM, to facilitate the planning by the Commonwealth Secretariat and Government of Uganda.

The *final session* (after lunch) will start with a panel discussion on “Women in Decision-Making at All Levels” which will include Ministers/Heads of NWMs from the Commonwealth regions. The panellists will share country experiences on strategies, achievements and challenges in promoting women’s representation in decision-making at various levels – parliament, local government, and public and private sectors.

The *final plenary* will also include reports from the regional caucuses on 8WAMM planning, to be followed by decisions on the dates and venue, theme, objectives, agenda, structure and process of 8WAMM; and Commonwealth proposals for the CSW Workplan 2007-2011.

The meeting will also agree a Commonwealth Ministers’ Statement to the 50th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), reiterating the Commonwealth’s commitment to principles of gender equality and aspirations for future development as set out in the PoA, and putting forward the Commonwealth’s proposals for the CSW Workplan 2007-2011.