

**MESSAGE TO CHOGM 2007
FROM
COMMONWEALTH EDUCATION MINISTERS
2006**

1. We, the Commonwealth Education Ministers, held our 16th triennial Conference in Cape Town, South Africa from 11 to 14 December 2006 to review progress in education across the Commonwealth in fulfillment of the mandates from the Edinburgh 15th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (15CCEM) in the Six Action Areas. We benefited from the conclusions and recommendations of the Stakeholders Forum; Teachers Forum; and Youth Forum and commend the manner in which these fed into our own deliberations at 16CCEM.
2. We affirm that basic education is a human right and is central to the Commonwealth development efforts. Education plays a major role in improving health, reducing poverty, creating wealth, enhancing human security, and enabling active participation in a globalised world. Education is fundamental in developing democratic values and good governance. To this end we believe it is important to provide young people with opportunities to access quality education.
3. We affirm that in an increasingly divided and insecure world education has a critical role in creating a culture of peace, tolerance and mutual respect.
4. We noted with satisfaction the progress made by the Commonwealth Secretariat and member countries, in the Action Areas identified in the Edinburgh Action Plan, and the need to combine our efforts with our partners in civil society and the private sector to meet the targets of the Education For All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.
5. We directed the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth education organisations to target and support on a priority basis member countries that are at risk of not achieving the education MDGs.
6. We identified key issues, opportunities and challenges that need to be addressed if our educational aspirations in the main theme of the Conference “*Access to Quality Education: For the Good of All*” are to be met. These included financing and resourcing education, barriers to gender equity and developing holistic educational policies.
7. We endorsed the 16CCEM recommendation on HIV & AIDs that we must sustain our individual and collective efforts to fight the spread of HIV & AIDS. We have committed ourselves to take urgent action to mitigate the impact of AIDS on education, including orphans, students and teachers.
8. We noted the proposal presented by the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) to establish a Ministerial Working Group to consider the possibility of establishing an appropriate facility for tertiary education in the Commonwealth as an additional Commonwealth resource in education.

9. We commended the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) on its work and approved its three-year plan 2006-2009. We also supported its target of raising C\$12m for the Plan period. We noted with appreciation UK's commitment to provide a 30 per cent contribution to the total funds provided by other Commonwealth countries for COL for the Plan period as an incentive for increased funding.

10. We commended the Commonwealth agencies working in education, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth of Learning, the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan on their increased collaboration.

11. We discussed the major challenges faced by small and developing Commonwealth countries in ensuring that they have a sufficient number of well-qualified teachers to ensure universal access to a quality education. We believe that the development of the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol is slowly improving the situation and discussed ways in which the Commonwealth could work together to improve the situation.

12. We agreed that Commonwealth Heads of Government should affirm the paramount importance of safeguarding the values, standards and quality of education.

13. In recognition of the critical role that education and training plays in contributing to governments' efforts to meet development goals, we urge Commonwealth Heads of Government to raise levels of funding for education.

Cape Town, South Africa
14 December 2006