

**Thirteenth Meeting of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment (CCGE)
5 February 2007, Nairobi**

Summary Statement by the Chair

Commonwealth Ministers and Senior Officials met on 5 February 2007 as the thirteenth session of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment (CCGE). The meeting was convened to coincide with the 24th Session of the Governing Council of UNEP/Global Environment Ministers Forum held in Nairobi. It was chaired by the Hon. Prof. Kivutha Kibwana, M.P., Minister for Environment and Natural Resources, Kenya.

Ministers considered and broadly welcomed the approaches outlined in a Commonwealth programme of work on adaptation to climate change. Stressing the importance of avoiding duplication, working with existing initiatives, and drawing on the Commonwealth's comparative advantage in elaborating this work programme, delegates highlighted a number of areas for particular attention.

There was a strong call for the greater involvement of young people in international policy debates around climate change issues – seeking their views, and developing their capacity through direct involvement in decision making forums and in technical workshops. Such an approach can help support a positive role for young people in society, and bring greater continuity and resilience in approaches to climate change.

Ministers sought a focused and sustained capacity building programme by the Commonwealth, aimed at the needs of developing countries. One delegate expressed the need to achieve capacity building at the grassroots level, and through practical learning by examining demonstration projects in the field. Another highlighted the role of local authorities, stressing that capacity building in this sphere would help to facilitate concrete action on the ground.

To engage citizens, environmental education is required at all levels, from primary to tertiary levels, and including environmental awareness programmes. Knowledge networking was seen as a Commonwealth strength, and efforts to promote curriculum development and exchange were welcomed by the CCGE.

With respect to policy issues, delegates saw scope for the Commonwealth to examine: funding regimes on climate change adaptation, including at the regional level; insurance issues; the implications of proposals such as a tax on aircraft fuel or flights; and approaches to maintaining and sustaining rainforest resources which is an important natural resource in many member states.

One delegate highlighted the Commonwealth's role in ensuring the full participation of small island states and least developed countries in multilateral negotiations. Other suggestions included: stepping up South–South co-operation through the Commonwealth, which could promote an exchange of experiences on issues such as disaster risk reduction, disaster management and insurance; enhancing regional approaches; and using the Commonwealth's experience on governance issues to facilitate a more streamlined approach at the national level to adaptation to climate change.

Ministers called for climate change concerns to be prioritised within discussions at the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Kampala, Uganda in November 2007. Among the views expressed was the hope that CHOGM would provide new political momentum that enabled countries to fight the challenge of climate change. Issues for consideration included: funding and technology transfer needs; the relationship between poverty and climate change (including, the impact of conflict, internal displacement of persons and refugees in managing environmental degradation); and experiences with the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol. Other suggestions were: a strategic examination of peace and security issues related to environmental concerns; an examination of the impacts of climate change on human and economic development as part of the CHOGM theme of 'transforming Commonwealth societies'; and a focus on reducing deforestation.

The Hon. Jesca Eriyo, Minister of State for Environment for the Republic of Uganda, agreed to raise the issues highlighted by the CCGE with the President of Uganda and to liaise closely with the Commonwealth Secretariat in taking forward preparations for CHOGM.

Nairobi – 6 February 2007