



Consultation of Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers

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

DRAFT TO FACILITATE DISCUSSION AT C-WAMM

Statement by Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers to the 50th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

United Nations Headquarters, New York
27 February – 10 March 2006

We, the Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers, meeting on 26 February 2006 in New York, representing 53 member States, both developing and developed, and covering 5 regions, affirm the importance of the 50th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and welcome this opportunity to articulate the Commonwealth's voice in the discussions on the CSW's 2007-2011 work plan.

We reaffirm our commitment to implementing the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015, which was presented to the Beijing+10 Review in March 2005 and endorsed by Commonwealth Heads of Government at their summit in November 2005. We equally support CEDAW, BPfA, the Beijing+10 Declaration, the Millennium Development Goals, and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in advancing the achievement of women's rights and gender equality.

We acknowledge the significance of the two major global meetings after the Beijing+10 Review, namely, the Millennium Summit Review in September 2005, and the 6th Ministerial Meeting of the WTO in December 2005. These two meetings re-established the goals and objectives of narrowing the gap between rich and poor nations in order to achieve a more just and equitable world order for women and men, and girls and boys. We also recognise that key international targets for eliminating gender disparity in education and increasing coverage for HIV/AIDS treatment were missed in 2005.

Having noted the decision of the Economic and Social Council to develop a multi-year programme of work for the period 2007-2011, and the agenda to finalise proposals for future themes of work at the 50th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, we, Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers, taking into account the current development challenges, recommend that the following critical areas to advance women's rights and gender equality be included in the CSW workplan 2007-2011:

- (i) Gender, democracy, peace and conflict;
- (ii) Women's rights including sexual and reproductive rights;
- (iii) Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment;
- (iv) Gender and HIV/AIDS;
- (v) Girls' education and women's literacy
- (vi) Reproductive health, maternal and child mortality.

[Please note that the above are examples of issues that Ministers may wish to propose for the CSW Workplan 2007-2011, which are linked to the critical areas for Commonwealth action in the 2005-2015 PoA].

These priorities are based on the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015. They also resonate with the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document which identified additional areas for promoting MDG 3 on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

We urge governments and partners to recognise that millions of women and girls are not benefiting equally from development programmes: for example, maternal mortality rates are actually rising in some countries, some countries are not on track to achieve the goal of universal primary education (UPE) by 2015, and HIV/AIDS most affects women in Africa and is rising fastest among school age girls.

We call for a step change now. Governments and partners should ensure that additional resources for development from the G8 in the form of increased aid or debt relief must reach the poorest, especially women and girls.

Resolving to build on international commitments, we call for strengthened partnerships at all levels – between governments, civil society and other partners – to ensure effective implementation of the finalised work programme of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 articulates the vision that that advancing gender equality will contribute to development, democracy and peace. This is reflected in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document which reaffirmed that “gender equality and the promotion and protection of the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all are essential to advance development and peace and security”. Let us work collectively to achieve these aspirations.