

16th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (16CCEM)
11-14 December 2006
Cape Town, South Africa

Cape Town Communiqué

1. The 16th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (16CCEM) was held in Cape Town, South Africa, from 11-14 December 2006. It was chaired by the Hon Naledi Pandor, MP, Minister of Education, South Africa, and opened by the Hon Trevor Manuel, MP, Minister of Finance, South Africa.
2. Delegations from 36 countries, of which 29 were led by Ministers, attended the Conference. The structure of this Ministerial meeting included three important parallel components: Stakeholders Forum, Youth Forum, and, for the first time, a Teachers Forum. Ministers, delegates from the other three parallel fora and partner organisations met to reflect on the theme ‘Access to Quality Education: for the Good of All’. The discussions of the three parallel fora provided an input into Ministerial deliberations and included wide ranging and diverse perspectives. Also in parallel with the Conference, was a successful exhibition showcase. The Statements from the three parallel Forums are appended.
3. The host Minister, the Hon Naledi Pandor, summarised the essence of the meeting as follows: *“Our hope for this Conference is that it should move us beyond talkshop towards a process that concretely develops strategies for promoting and monitoring, and where necessary, supporting progress.”*
4. Professor Mahmood Mamdani, the Keynote Speaker, highlighted the link between general and higher education. He emphasised that *“If your object is to transform general education, you have to begin with higher education. For higher education is the strategic heart of education; it’s where choices are developed.”*
5. Ministers reaffirmed that education is a fundamental human right and integral to the democratisation and development objectives of the Commonwealth.
6. Ministers reviewed progress in education across the Commonwealth in the context of the Six Action Areas agreed at 15CCEM in Edinburgh 2003 and they reaffirmed their commitment to accelerate (i) the achievement of Universal Primary Education; (ii) elimination of gender disparities in education; (iii) improvement of quality in education; (iv) use of Distance Learning to overcome

barriers; (v) support to education in difficult circumstances; and (vi) the mitigation of the impact of HIV & AIDS on education.

7. Ministers appreciated the Commonwealth Secretariat's specific interventions in the following areas: identification and sharing of good practices relating to universal primary education and the elimination of gender disparities; the issue of boys' under-achievement; education in difficult circumstances; improving quality in education through teacher training; development of a Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol; ScoreCard for Girls' Education; impact of HIV & AIDS in education; and nomadic education.

8. Ministers noted that some Commonwealth countries have achieved Universal Primary Education, and others are close to achieving this Goal. However, several Commonwealth countries are in danger of not meeting the agreed targets. In recognition of the fact that lack of resources, amongst other factors, acts as a constraint to increasing enrolment and ensuring attendance, Ministers expressed the need for increased public spending in education.

9. Ministers agreed that the three parallel Forums should continue as parallel events at the next Ministerial Conference in 2009. Ministers also agreed that the Good Practice Awards should continue following a review of the form, process and structure based on the 16CCEM experience.

10. Ministers recognised the contribution of the new Commonwealth-UNESCO Chair for HIV & AIDS and Education established at the University of the West Indies. They appreciated the fact that it has strengthened the education sector's response to HIV & AIDS in the Caribbean region.

11. Ministers approved the Secretariat's proposed Work Plan for 2007-2010. They appreciated the increased collaboration between Commonwealth agencies working in education and supported the suggestion that the Commonwealth Secretariat, COL, ACU and Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan pursue increased harmonisation of their forward plans. They urged for close monitoring and reporting on progress.

12. Ministers deliberated on the themes of the non-state sector, equity, quality and the teaching profession, and globalisation. They noted the importance of these themes in supporting the Commonwealth education objectives. The sub-theme of 'For the Good of All' permeated all discussions.

13. Ministers underscored the view that governments have primary responsibility for the provision of education. They encouraged the non-state sector to support education and training, and agreed that in order to facilitate equal access, quality education and to avoid exploitation, governments should develop appropriate regulatory measures for the non-state sector.

Commonwealth of Learning

14. Ministers complimented the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) on its work and achievements over the past three years, 2003-2006. They endorsed the Plan, 'Learning for Development, 2006-2009', and recognised the need to mobilise the proposed level of funding of C\$12 million for the Plan period. Ministers noted with appreciation the United Kingdom's offer to contribute 30 per cent to the total funds provided by other Commonwealth countries for COL for the Plan period as an incentive for increased funding. They also noted the commitment of the Governments of Cyprus, India and New Zealand to increase funding to COL.

15. Ministers acknowledged that Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has improved access, and enhanced quality of education and training in many parts of the developing Commonwealth. The implementation of the Virtual University of the Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) is a step in the right direction as it seeks to bridge the digital divide and encourage collaboration.

Association of Commonwealth Universities

16. Ministers noted the report from the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), including a proposal for the creation of a Ministerial Working Group to consider the possible establishment of tertiary education facility.

Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan

17. Ministers noted the three year survey of activity under the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) and welcomed the significant expansion of activities in recent years. They approved the recommendations that a small central unit be created to undertake those responsibilities that cannot be undertaken by national agencies; that greater collaboration should take place between agencies; that an endowment fund be established to mark the 50th Anniversary of the CSFP in 2009; and that a target of 2009 scholars and fellows on award be set for 2009. Ministers also welcomed an offer from the Association of Commonwealth Universities to support the new unit.

Commonwealth Institute/Centre for Commonwealth Education

18. Ministers noted the report of the Commonwealth Institute, including the request to Ministers to sustain their support to the Centre for Commonwealth Education at Cambridge University.

Stakeholders Forum

19. Delegates discussed three key issues around the 16CCEM theme: access to quality education; improving the quality of education; and financing and resourcing quality education. They acknowledged the key barriers that continue to obstruct access to quality education and suggested approaches to deal with them.

Teachers Forum

20. Delegates proposed that initiatives be developed to address Education for All which build upon effective strategies and good practices for teaching and learning. The need for regular monitoring and evaluation was emphasised.

Youth Forum

21. Delegates recommended to Ministers the need for demonstrable prioritisation of education through higher budgetary allocations, and monitoring the use of resources. They further recommended that the Commonwealth Secretariat facilitates the review of institutional frameworks of the education sector to address emerging challenges.

Action Plan

22. Ministers reaffirmed the principles enunciated in the Edinburgh Communiqué and agreed:

- to accelerate and sustain the attainment of UPE and the elimination of gender disparities at all levels of education;
- to strengthen the education sector's response to HIV & AIDS including age-appropriate HIV & AIDS education in every education system within the Commonwealth;
- to provide quality training for teachers to meet the needs at all levels of education;
- to train more teachers to meet the needs of UPE, and to devise strategies for increasing the number of young people coming into the teaching profession;
- to ensure continuing professional development of teachers and to develop and implement quality assurance measures;

- to encourage and promote school to school links and at other levels of the system as a means of fostering mutual understanding and to improve the quality of learning outcomes;
- to expand access to secondary as well as tertiary education;
- to encourage and increase parental and community involvement in education and school-based activities;
- to encourage education about the Commonwealth and its values, including human rights, in our systems of education;
- to give more attention to the issues of school leadership and governance in our efforts to attain quality education; and
- to expand and strengthen collaboration with partner agencies, non-state sector and civil society organisations with due regard for equity and quality.

23. Ministers directed the Secretariat:

- to provide regular reports of Commonwealth progress on achieving the MDGs in education and Education for All Goals, and to give priority to member countries at risk of not achieving MDG targets by 2015;
- to review the implementation of the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol and report to 17CCEM;
- to review the form and structure of the Education Good Practice Awards based on the 16CCEM experience;
- to constitute thematic working groups as determined by Ministers;
- to develop draft Terms of Reference and constitute a Ministerial Working Group to consider the proposal for the creation of an appropriate Commonwealth facility to respond to needs in tertiary education in the light of significant developments in this area; and
- to constitute a Ministerial Steering Committee to monitor progress on attainment of education related MDGs by Commonwealth member states and review implementation of the educational plan of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

24. Ministers agreed to the attached message to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), to be held in Kampala, Uganda, 2007.

25. Ministers expressed their deep and sincere thanks for the warm welcome and outstanding hospitality extended by the Government of South Africa. They also appreciated the high level of efficiency with which the Conference was organised.

17CCEM

26. Ministers warmly welcomed the offer of the Government of Malaysia to host the 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (17CCEM).

Cape Town, South Africa
14 December 2006