



# Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment

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## FOR THE INFORMATION OF DELEGATIONS

### Commonwealth Secretariat Work on Climate Change

#### 1. Introduction

This paper provides information on recent work by the Commonwealth Secretariat on climate change. It is presented to the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment in follow-up to their discussions in February 2007, when the Group considered the elements of a Commonwealth Programme of Work on Climate Change.

The Commonwealth Secretariat has mainstreamed climate change across its work programme, focusing on areas where it can address gaps and use its comparative advantage to add value to existing efforts. There are two key approaches:

- engaging stakeholders to develop awareness, understanding and political will; and
- providing technical assistance and capacity building in targeted areas through the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation.

Recognising that one of the comparative advantages of the Commonwealth is its networks, the Commonwealth Secretariat worked with the Commonwealth Foundation to formulate the Commonwealth programme of work, which galvanises the association's networks to support engagement and capacity building at all levels.

#### 2. Actions by the Commonwealth Secretariat with Partners

##### Engagement of Stakeholders

- *Commonwealth Heads of Government:*
  - Commonwealth Heads of Government (Uganda, 23-25 November 2007) agreed the Lake Victoria Commonwealth Climate Change Action Plan (Annex 1).
- *Parliamentarians:*
  - Capacity built through Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) seminars (Abuja, September 2006; New Delhi, September 2007; London, November 2007);

- Best practice shared through a CPA Environment Study Group, Belize, February 2007;
  - Draft tool kit prepared for use in November 2007 by a major CPA conference on climate change to be held in London. Development of an on-line network will be considered next.
- *Youth:*
    - Young people brought into high-level debates through their involvement in the Commonwealth Youth Forum and Commonwealth Foreign Ministers meetings in Uganda, November 2007 (Ugandan Government hosted the 6th Commonwealth Youth Forum, Entebbe from 14th to 21st November 2007).
    - The flagship Diploma in Youth Development Work updated to integrate disaster risk reduction and climate change concerns. The Diploma is delivered in 45 countries by 27 Universities and training agencies across the Commonwealth.
- *Finance Ministers:*
    - Finance Ministers provided with a framework for action in preparing their economies for the challenges raised by climate change. Commonwealth Finance Ministers met in Guyana, 15-17 October 2007 to discuss: 'Climate Change: The Challenges Facing Finance Ministers'. Their concerns were highlighted in the communiqué of the meeting (Annex 2).
    - A study on the implication of the concept of 'carbon miles' on Kenya's horticulture industry has been requested by the Kenyan government. The study has just been initiated.
- *Gender:*
    - An analysis of the gender aspects of climate change was provided to Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting in 2007 to help inform policy making.

### **Capacity Building and Technical Assistance**

- *Institutional Building:* CFTC experts have been requested by the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) in Belize (resource economist) and by the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) (climate adviser). The Secretariat is also exploring ways in which it can support institutional capacity in the Indian Ocean region through CFTC. Key objectives are to: (a) support institutional capacity at regional levels in SIDS; and (b) network SIDS through the CFTC advisers. Placements should be made during the first quarter of 2008.
- *Sectoral climate modelling:* Climate modellers are being brought together with agronomists in the Caribbean (planned for March 2008, Guyana) to design food security strategies for a more arid future. This work is being implemented in collaboration with the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre.
- *Education:* ComSec has examined gaps in curricula available in small states and convened members of the University Consortium of Small Island States to discuss ways forward. UCSIS has agreed to jointly organise courses and will develop materials in close collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning. The objective is to help Commonwealth universities in small states to share and

strengthen curricula, to: (a) develop a cadre of climate professionals; and (b) mainstream climate change in professional training.

- *Legislative frameworks:* A preliminary review of legislative frameworks has been completed as a first step in strengthening these, and planning frameworks, to support pro-active disaster risk reduction and adaptation through the Commonwealth's programme of work on human settlements (ComHabitat).
- *Climate negotiators from small states:* plans advanced through discussions with the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the Foundation of International Environment Law and Development (FIELD) for a meeting of small states in early 2008 to digest discussions that took place at the Bali Conference of the Parties, and consider ways to ensure that all member states, especially small states and LDCS, have access to timely and relevant information to support their full participation in climate change negotiations.
- *Iwokrama:*  
The Commonwealth Secretariat supports the Iwokrama International Rain Forest Programme in Guyana through advice and policy support and its role on the International Board of Trustees. It also provides practical support through the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, mostly in the form of core staff positions and technical advisers.
- *Green policy:* action is being taken to deepen the Commonwealth Secretariat's in-house action on environmental issues.



## Annex 1: Lake Victoria Commonwealth Climate Change Action Plan

# Lake Victoria Commonwealth Climate Change Action Plan

We, the Heads of Government of the Commonwealth, are gravely concerned about the threat that climate change represents to human security and economic wellbeing.

2 We reaffirm our continued commitment to the 1989 *Langkawi Declaration on the Environment* when Commonwealth Heads of Government first defined our collective concern, concluding that:

- Serious deterioration of the environment is a threat to the well-being of current and future generations;
- Delay in halting environmental degradation will result in permanent and irreversible damage;
- Threats to the environment need to be viewed and addressed in a balanced perspective, mindful of the needs to eradicate poverty, provide sustainable development, and enhanced quality of life for all;
- Most environmental problems transcend national boundaries, and therefore require solutions that are mutually reinforcing at global, regional, national and community levels; and,
- Solutions to today's environmental challenges also require active participation by all.

3 We are conscious that climate change is a direct threat to the very survival of some Commonwealth countries, notably small island states. We are also conscious of the threat to low-lying coastal regions. Climate change can undermine our continuing efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We recognize that the cost of inaction on mitigation and adaptation is far greater than the cost of early action.

4 We believe that the diversity of the Commonwealth places our association in a unique position to support the pursuit of ambitious solutions, particularly through our unqualified support for work through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to reach an agreement on collective, comprehensive and global action.

5 Our Commonwealth diversity also underscores the importance of common but differentiated responsibilities; recognition of the respective capabilities of states, especially the constraints faced by least developed and developing countries; and the importance of developed countries taking the lead. Burden sharing should be equitable, should not perpetuate poverty, and should be compatible with accelerated development.

6 We call for increased financial flows for adaptation, and their improved effectiveness. We urge additional incentives for developing countries, in particular

through flexibility mechanisms, for commitments to enhanced mitigation action. Carbon trading will be important in this regard.

7 We recognise the need to overcome technical, economic and policy barriers to facilitate the development, diffusion and deployment of affordable low- and zero-emission technologies and renewable energy. We also recognise the need for energy efficiency and conservation.

8 We firmly believe that no strategy or actions to deal with climate change should have the effect of depriving developing countries of the possibility of sustainable economic development. On the contrary, measures to tackle the impacts of climate change should support the positive economic and social transformation of societies. In particular, the easing of population pressure on agricultural land and the successful development of secondary and tertiary sectors in economies requires the provision of clean energy.

9 We believe that development itself is an important tool in addressing climate change, since a well educated and healthy society, with a diverse economy, is best placed to be flexible and to generate the necessary resources to invest in cleaner technologies and systems, and to fund adaptation measures.

10 Effective action will only be possible with the willing support of the Commonwealth population as a whole, including women and young people. We invite the family of Commonwealth organisations to play a full part in promoting a better understanding of climate change and its impacts, and in addressing adaptation and mitigation challenges.

11 Accordingly, we are resolved, individually and collectively, to pursue active participation through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), caucusing together and leveraging from our shared vision and diversity to the fullest extent possible. These negotiations should be inclusive in nature and should work towards outcomes that are ambitious, comprehensive, equitable, have respect for different national circumstances, and provide for flexibility in addressing climate change. Our shared goal should be to achieve a comprehensive post-2012 global agreement that strengthens, broadens, and deepens current arrangements and leads to reduced emissions of global greenhouse gases. This should include a long term aspirational global goal for emissions reduction to which all countries would contribute.

12 We are also resolved, individually and collectively, to pursue the following actions, which should also inform our positions at Bali:

- (i) Pursuit of initiatives to strengthen the quality and participation levels at international negotiations on climate change, such as assisting Commonwealth developing countries with their national negotiating capacity.

(ii) Promotion of Commonwealth work, drawing on our networks of professional associations and other resources, to strengthen consideration of the human and economic aspects of climate change.

(ii) Support for improved land use management, including conservation and sustainable use of forest resources. This should comprise market-based mechanisms and compensatory measures for the preservation of standing forests; provisions for reforestation and afforestation; and measures to combat illegal logging and other causes of deforestation. In this regard, the Commonwealth's commitment to the Iwokrama Rainforest Programme is renewed and efforts should continue to be pursued to widen international knowledge and support of it.

(iv) Work to study and make recommendations on issues related to the sustainability of fresh agricultural produce in respect of transported exports, particularly from developing countries, with a view to securing more sound information on carbon footprints related to the export of fresh produce.

(v) Renewed efforts to support natural disaster management in member countries. This should include further consideration of insurance proposals for small island states, including those of the Commonwealth Disaster Management Agency, while the Commonwealth Secretariat should continue its work to strengthen natural disaster management in member countries in conjunction with other international efforts.

(vi) The provision of technical assistance and other support, particularly to least developed countries and vulnerable small states, to assess the implications of climate change and the benefits of building adaptation into all aspects of national planning and budgeting, wherever feasible and practical.

13 We are resolved that Commonwealth governments and the Commonwealth Secretariat will play their full part to implement our shared goals and envisaged actions, working in strategic partnership and conjunction with other international institutions, raising awareness, facilitating access, and sharing best practice. Our governments will contribute additional technical and financial support according to our means.

24 November 2007



## **Annex 2: Paragraphs Related to Climate Change from the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting Communiqué**

### **Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting Guyana, 15-17 October, 2007 Communiqué 2007**

1. Commonwealth Finance Ministers met in Georgetown, Guyana on 15, 16 and 17 October. The meeting was chaired by Hon Dr Ashni Singh, Minister of Finance, Guyana. Ministers welcomed the opening address of His Excellency President Bharrat Jagdeo and expressed agreement with the principles outlined.
2. Ministers considered the special theme of Climate Change. They also reviewed the world economic situation; discussed a range of issues that are on the agenda of the annual meetings of the World Bank and IMF in Washington DC; and discussed policy issues relating to; debt and debt relief, filling the infrastructure gap, supporting development in small states, aid and aid architecture, promoting investment and Commonwealth development co-operation. They agreed to take forward their conclusions to the IMF/World Bank meetings in Washington DC.

#### **Climate Change**

3. Ministers recognised the critical role for finance and planning ministries in addressing challenges of climate change. They also expressed appreciation that the issue will be discussed at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, in Kampala, with a view to building global consensus in this area. They welcomed the contributions of civil society and the Commonwealth Business Council to their discussion, and emphasised that all sectors in society would need to play an active role in addressing climate change and its impact. They also welcomed a presentation by Ms Sunita Narain, which informed their deliberations.
4. Ministers recognised that the challenges presented by climate change are global in nature and require global responses in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities of states.
5. Ministers affirmed their commitment to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and, taking account of growing international resolve, they stressed the importance of Commonwealth governments working together, and with other nations, towards the successful launch of negotiations on a global and comprehensive framework to address climate change, at the Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC, in Bali, in December 2007, and reaching a new global agreement, in Copenhagen, in 2009.
6. Ministers recognised that the cost of inaction on climate change mitigation greatly outweighs the cost of early action. They stressed that Commonwealth countries are already experiencing the effects of climate change. Ministers stressed that the magnitude and frequency of natural disasters and the effects of global warming and climate change have serious negative implications for growth and development of small states and other environmentally vulnerable developing

economies. They called for global efforts to mobilise and commit financial resources to support these countries through common frameworks.

7. National economies face new opportunities and challenges as a result of climate change and international agreements reached to address the issues. Ministers called for concerted efforts to assure that the challenges of sustainable development and climate change are integrated into all levels of planning and decision-making, using a gender sensitive approach. They noted that:

- Early analysis will help governments to consider the implications of climate change for key sectors and to evaluate proposals for action.
- Financing and policy frameworks are needed to support adaptation by households, communities and firms and to support innovation and application of low-carbon technologies and carbon markets.
- Small states and developing countries will be hardest hit economically, and will require financial support that is additional to existing resources committed for development assistance. This is especially true for small states and LDCs because of their very limited capacity to adapt. Enhancing existing funding mechanisms and innovative sources of financing such as carbon taxes, charges, carbon trading and blended finance, may all have a role to play. Ministers welcomed progress made with developing and implementing the World Bank's Clean Energy Investment Framework.
- Greater use of clean technology will be essential, and this remains a challenge. Technical, economic and policy barriers need to be overcome, and international co-operation stepped-up, to facilitate technology development and transfer to the developing countries. In this context, there is need for special funds which are easily accessible to support investment in renewable energy and adaptation measures and plans.
- Appropriate economic instruments and/or financial compensation are required to incentivise good practices especially the preservation of standing forests as well as measures for reforestation and afforestation.

8. In addition, Ministers called for a Commonwealth initiative on economics of climate change to help member states to develop and promote common positions and take practical action on the basis of a clear understanding of the implications of climate change for their economies. The aim should be to help Commonwealth member states to: share experiences; disseminate best practices; strengthen planning in the context of climate change; and build institutional capacity for assessing and adapting to the impacts of climate change with particular consideration of areas such as modeling sectoral impacts, managing carbon offsets, and analysing the costs and benefits of proposed actions.

9. Ministers acknowledged the work of the Iwokrama International Centre and called for international support to strengthen the Centre's financial position to carry out its programme for the fulfillment of its objectives, and to ensure that it continues to be a model for sustainable forest management involving local communities.