

**Report of the
Commonwealth Meetings
on the eve of the 52nd Session of
the United Nations Commission on
the Status of Women (CSW)**

23 and 24 February 2008

**Helmsley Hotel
New York**



Commonwealth Secretariat

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Executive Summary

In February 2008 the Commonwealth held two meetings in New York on the eve of the 52nd Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW): the 3rd Meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG) and a Consultation of Commonwealth National Women's Machineries (NWMs).

The **meeting of the CGPMG**, held on Saturday 23 February, was convened to share the findings of a gender audit conducted on the Commonwealth Secretariat; to finalise recommendations for future steps for the monitoring and evaluation of the Plan of Action; to provide an update on the Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security; and to inform about the new membership of the CGPMG and elect a chair.

The objectives of the gender audit had been to assess gender mainstreaming within the Secretariat and the quality and impact of its external programmes for gender equality. The findings pointed to positive results such as the high-level commitment to gender from Commonwealth Heads of Government and as evidenced in the Secretariat's Strategic Plan. However, this had not translated into impacts in external programmes, nor into effective gender mainstreaming within the Secretariat. The report had subsequently identified a number of steps to be taken to more effectively mainstream gender, which the Secretariat was taking forward. The meeting had several additional suggestions.

The Secretariat then reported on the responses received to a questionnaire sent to NWMs on the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework that asked them to identify challenges, propose priority actions to address these and make suggestions for harmonisation of reporting. The meeting discussed these issues as well as the nature of indicators, the process for reporting where data were not available and steps to actualise the M&E process in member States. It made a number of recommendations.

The next item for discussion was the Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security, the terms of reference for which had been adopted at the 8th Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (8WAMM). The Secretariat reported that it had received limited responses to its request for nominations, with the majority being representatives of NWMs. Since the Group was designed to have much broader representation to ensure its effectiveness, the meeting recommended that Ministers might want to reconsider their nominations and that the period for nominations be extended to 31 March.

The final item on the agenda was the membership of the CGPMG and the election of a new chair. Two members from each region rotated out and two new ones came in using the alphabetical system of rotation agreed to the previous year. However, due to the concerns of some participants that this methodology did not allow for representation from the different sub-regions, it was agreed to revisit it the following year. Two countries were nominated for the chair, and the decision was taken that Botswana would serve from 2008–2009 and Bangladesh from 2009–2010.

The **Consultation of Commonwealth National Women's Machineries** was held on Sunday 24 February. The aims of the meeting were to review the outcomes of 8WAMM; to consider the report of the CGPMG from its meeting the previous day and issues arising; to move forward on implementing the M&E Framework and ensuring harmonisation with other instruments; and to strategise ways to develop and build on the nature of communication between the Commonwealth Secretariat and NWMs.

The day began with brief welcoming remarks by the Chair, Mr Ransford Smith, Deputy Secretary-General, Commonwealth Secretariat, and a keynote address by Ms Rachel Mayanja, Assistant United Nations Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. The address focused on the synergies between the outcomes from 8WAMM and the proposed outcomes and expected recommendations from the 52nd Session of the CSW concerning financing for gender equality.

Ms Mayanja said that despite the acknowledgement by world leaders at the 2005 World Summit that progress for women was progress for all, the growing body of evidence demonstrating that gender equality made good economic sense and the calls for mainstreaming a gender perspective in all economic and public finance processes, adequate resources had not been systematically allocated to achieve this. She identified a number

of recurring messages in the discourse on financing of gender equality work, and then highlighted a series of upcoming meetings that she suggested offered key entry points for systematically stressing the linkages between development, the achievement of gender equality and the availability of predictable and sustainable resources. She urged participants to seize the moment and take advantage of the opportunity provided by these meetings to underline the urgent and critical need to turn policy commitments to gender equality into concrete action.

The next session consisted of a briefing on follow-up to 8WAMM. The first speaker was Hon Syda Bbumba, Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Uganda, and 8WAMM Chair, who expressed her thanks to fellow Ministers and the Secretariat for helping to make that meeting so successful. She emphasised that the close relationship between the themes of the CSW and 8WAMM provided a strategic opportunity for the Commonwealth to demonstrate strong leadership on key issues that were central to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

The second presentation was made by Ms Sarojini Ganju Thakur, Head of Gender Section, Commonwealth Secretariat. She noted that post-8WAMM the communiqués from both the Finance Ministers Meeting (FMM) and Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) had recognised the importance of allocating adequate resources for the implementation of commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment. She then presented highlights of the implementation of the Plan of Action by the Gender Section since 8WAMM in the four critical areas of its work. In addition, Ms Thakur discussed the conclusions of a gender audit conducted at the Secretariat in terms of both positive findings as well as problem areas and noted that a number of steps had been identified in order to more effectively mainstream gender. She ended her presentation by pointing to some of the challenges ahead and setting a forward-looking agenda.

The third presenter, Ms Anisha Rajapakse, Programme Manager, Commonwealth Foundation, spoke about the Partners' Forum that had been convened just prior to 8WAMM and at which civil society had deliberated on a number of sub-themes. She noted that paragraph 23 of the 8WAMM Communiqué had emphasised that 'the challenge of prioritising gender equality can only be addressed effectively through co-ordinated action and genuine partnership with civil society'. Ms Rajapakse also said that civil society organisations expected the Foundation and the Secretariat to develop an M&E Framework that would engage them in a meaningful way in achieving the Plan of Action's vision and objectives.

The Consultation then heard from the outgoing Chair of the CGPMG, H E Ambassador Rosalyn Hazelle, who presented a report of the Group's meeting the previous day. This had focused on reviewing the findings of the gender audit, developing recommendations on operationalising the M&E Framework, updating members on the Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security, discussing the CGPMG's membership and electing a new chair. Gratitude was expressed to Ambassador Hazelle by both the Secretariat and member countries for her work over the previous two years, and two specific outcomes from the CGPMG over that period were highlighted: the M&E Framework and the terms of reference of the Working Group.

The next session, on the M&E Framework, consisted of an overview of responses to a questionnaire sent out to all NWMs asking about challenges, possible actions to tackle these and suggestions for harmonisation of the Framework with other reporting processes, followed by a working session in regional groupings to add to the information received.

The final agenda item was to discuss ways to develop and build on the nature of communication between the Secretariat and NWMs. Participants expressed their appreciation of the Secretariat's publications, particularly the gender mainstreaming series. The possibility was raised of having an e-newsletter that would reflect the priority areas and on-going work of the Secretariat and have space for contributions from NWMs and civil society on best practices, events, publications, etc. It was decided that further communication with NWMs was required on this issue.

The Consultation ended with thanks from the Chair to those present for their active participation, co-operation and spirit of collegiality and the exhortation that they effectively use the opportunities provided by upcoming meetings on funding issues to move forward the issue of financing gender equality.

Introduction

This report covers two meetings convened by the Commonwealth Secretariat at the Helmsley Hotel in New York in February 2008: (A) the 3rd Meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group on 23 February, and (B) a Consultation of Commonwealth National Women's Machineries on 24 February.

A. 3rd Meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG)

The Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG) was set up by Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers in 2005 to assist the Secretariat with monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015. The CGPMG is made up of a rotating core of national women's machineries and representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs) from all the regions.

The key objectives of the 3rd meeting of the CGPMG were:

- to review the findings of the Commonwealth Secretariat gender audit;
- to develop recommendations on operationalising the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework;
- to update members on progress in establishing the Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security; and
- to discuss the membership of the CGPMG and elect a new chair.

The agenda can be found at Annex A-1.

B. Consultation of Commonwealth National Women's Machineries

The Consultation was open to all Commonwealth member countries and invited partner organisations. There were delegates from 33 countries, who included Women's Affairs Ministers as well as representatives of international, Commonwealth, regional and bilateral partner agencies and CSOs. The main objectives of this meeting were:

- to review the outcomes of the 8th Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (8WAMM), held in Uganda in 2007;
- to consider the report of the CGPMG from its meeting the previous day and issues arising;
- to look at challenges in implementing the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and ensuring harmonisation with other instruments;
- to strategise ways to develop and build on the nature of communication between the Commonwealth Secretariat and NWMs; and
- to provide a forum for discussion and the sharing of experiences.

The agenda can be found at Annex B-1.

Details of both meetings are outlined below.

A. Report of the 3rd Meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG)

23 February 2008

**New York
Helmsley Hotel**

1 Welcome, Introductions and Opening Remarks

Ms Sarojini Ganju Thakur, Head of Gender Section, Commonwealth Secretariat, welcomed participants to the 3rd Meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG), making particular mention of those who had travelled long distances and braved inclement weather to get there. She briefly indicated that the focus of the meeting would be on monitoring and evaluation, the purpose for which the group had been established, before turning the floor over to H E Rosalyn Hazelle, Ambassador Plenipotentiary, St Kitts and Nevis, Chair of the CGPMG, to describe its objectives and anticipated outcomes.

Ambassador Hazelle added her welcome and said that this was a special meeting for her as it would be her last one as Chair after two years in that role. She reiterated that the group had been set up to monitor and evaluate the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015 and noted that the previous year's meeting had had two significant outcomes: the modalities for the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework and the terms of reference of the Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security. These had been endorsed by the subsequent New York Meeting of Commonwealth Heads of National Women's Machineries (NWMs) and approved at the 8th Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (8WAMM) in June 2007. The setting up of the Working Group had also been welcomed by Commonwealth Heads of Government at their meeting in November 2007. She explained that the purpose of the current meeting was to finalise issues and parameters for the M&E Framework and to come up with clear recommendations that could be presented to the Consultation of Commonwealth NWMs that would take place on the following day.

After the adoption of the agenda (see Annex A-1), Ambassador Hazelle listed the objectives of the meeting as to:

- Consider the findings of the Commonwealth Secretariat gender audit;
- Finalise recommendations for future steps for the M&E of the Plan of Action;
- Provide an update on the Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security;
- Inform about the new membership of the CGPMG and elect a chair.

She then invited those present to briefly introduce themselves.

2 Briefing on Commonwealth Secretariat Gender Audit

Ambassador Hazelle reminded participants that two years previously the meeting had been informed that a performance audit was being conducted on gender at the Commonwealth Secretariat. The report of its findings had been submitted at the end of 2007, with the summary report received the previous week. She said that since the progress of the Secretariat towards implementing the Plan of Action was not part of the M&E Framework, it was important for monitoring and evaluation to be carried out through internal processes to ensure that gender mainstreaming took place within the Secretariat itself.

Ms Thakur then presented the findings of the Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategy for Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming (2007). She noted that this was a first step, providing a baseline, and had looked at how the Secretariat had mainstreamed gender since the adoption of the 1995 Plan of Action. Its objectives had been twofold: first, to assess the degree to which gender equality and gender mainstreaming were understood by staff, incorporated into management practice and integrated into programmes and projects; and second, to assess the quality and impact of the Secretariat's programme for gender equality. It had been conducted by the Strategic Planning and Evaluation Division (SPED) between January 2006 and January 2007.

Ms Thakur went on to describe the methodology used in the audit, which had consisted of an internal

assessment of structures and procedures through desk research and a rapid panel review as well as an external review of projects and policies, including three field visits (to Bangladesh, The Gambia and Trinidad and Tobago). The auditors had also conducted interviews with staff, members of NWMs and partner organisations; conducted an online survey with staff, NWMs and development partners; and observed meetings of Women's Affairs Ministers and the Executive Board. She noted that the mandates for gender mainstreaming at the strategic level included successive plans of action, endorsed by WAMMs and Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGMs), as well as the Strategic Plan of the Secretariat. At the operational level, there was the work of the Gender Section, the focus on knowledge development (through books and other publications) and the fact that all projects and plans were supposed to consider a gender dimension.

Turning to the findings of the audit, Ms Thakur said that it had found the Gender Section to have had an external influencing role, especially through its publications, which were considered to be an asset. WAMMs and the annual meetings in New York were seen as providing NWMs with the opportunity to discuss relevant issues. Internally, there had been some successful cross-sectoral collaboration – for example, with the Governance and Institutional Development Division (GIDD), Economic Affairs Division (EAD) and Youth Affairs Division (YAD), as well as with the education and health sections of the Social Transformation Programmes Division (STPD). High-level commitments to mainstreaming had been made at CHOGMs, Finance Ministers Meetings (FMMs), etc., and there had been progress towards gender equality in staffing and human resources, although not at the middle management levels or in terms of consultants.

However, the audit had also noted that the Plan of Action was a commitment and not a gender policy for the Secretariat. Gender was not seen as being as important in development work as issues such as democracy and elections. The Gender Section had limited finances – less than 2 per cent of the Secretariat's budget – and human resources. There was no systematic cross-divisional work, and ways of working did not encourage this. Moreover, the location of the Gender Section in STPD with health and education was not geared to outreach in the Secretariat or work with other divisions.

Further findings were that the concept of gender mainstreaming had been diluted by a perceived need to mainstream other issues such as youth, civil society, etc. The perception among staff was on the one hand that the gender mainstreaming mandate was not serious and on the other that they were already doing it. There was a lack of gender training, which was not systematic or mandated, and monitoring and evaluation of the gender sensitivity of projects was weak. The gender coding system consisted primarily of ticking a box, and projects demonstrated a lack of understanding of gender. Externally, knowledge of the Plan of Action was limited to NWMs, and primary points of contact in foreign affairs ministries were generally unaware of it. The activities around gender were seen as sporadic and had limited impact. Ms Thakur quoted the audit as saying that the Secretariat was not measuring up to its stated commitments and referring to missed opportunities.

Putting the findings in context, Ms Thakur indicated that they were in keeping with major reviews of gender mainstreaming in other agencies such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UK Department for International Development (DFID), Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). These had similarly found a lack of clarity and guidance, missed opportunities, lack of leadership and commitment at senior levels, lack of systematic gender training and under-resourced gender units. However, agencies had reaffirmed their commitment to gender equality and recognised the need for individual and organisational change. DFID, for example, now had a senior manager who was a gender champion.

Ms Thakur then stated that the audit had offered three alternative recommendations for moving forward: to improve what existed, to take a different approach or to effectively mainstream. Of these, the Section

had chosen the last. In order to do this, it was planned to establish a clear gender policy; reintroduce a high level steering committee within the Secretariat to oversee gender mainstreaming; address the issue of the location of the Gender Section; enhance the accountability of individuals for gender mainstreaming and integrate this in performance indicators; focus more on internal influencing and ways of working that encouraged cross-divisional collaboration; work towards making points of contact more aware of the Plan of Action; work with Human Resources to introduce mandatory and specific gender training for all staff; introduce tools to improve project preparation, design, documentation and monitoring; and improve communication between the Secretariat and NWMs. She also noted that this was an opportune moment as gender was a cross-cutting issue in the Secretariat's new Strategic Plan for 2008–2011.

In conclusion, Ms Thakur referred to the role of the CGPMG in developing the Plan of Action and the M&E Framework for its effective implementation and to the mandate of the CGPMG to provide advice on the mid-term review of the Plan of Action in terms of both the Secretariat and member countries. She emphasised that the audit provided a baseline from which to measure progress, and asked whether the group would like to recommend priorities for action and review.

Ambassador Hazelle thanked Ms Thakur for her presentation, which had offered a frank evaluation, and said that it highlighted a number of pertinent issues. She suggested that an audit of NWMs in most member states would probably come to similar conclusions, and that the question was what needed to be put in place in order to move beyond this. She asked participants for practical ideas.

Plenary Discussion

Several participants agreed that the findings on the Gender Section mirrored their own situation as NWMs. Shared problems included lack of human and financial resources, lack of authority to ensure gender was included in the programmes and plans of other departments and dilution of gender mainstreaming through the mainstreaming of other issues such as HIV/AIDS. It was noted that since the Secretariat was doing such good work on gender budgeting with governments, it was particularly poor that gender only received 2 per cent of its own budget.

One suggestion that found favour was a proposal for an advocacy person or 'special adviser' on gender issues – similar to the role played by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women in the United Nations – to lead the process of gender mainstreaming in the Secretariat and member countries, working in the system on a day-to-day basis and reporting to NWMs or the CGPMG.

On the question of the location of the Gender Section, Ms Thakur indicated that one possibility might be in the office of the Secretary-General, in the same way that some NWMs were located in the Office of the Prime Minister, particularly since the incoming Secretary-General had indicated an interest in focusing on gender. However, caution was urged by participants in this regard based on their experience that a high-profile location did not necessarily lead to improved resources or effectiveness. In response, Ms Thakur agreed that it was possible such a move might actually increase the Section's marginalisation. She further noted that if the approach in the draft Strategic Plan was accepted, other divisions would have to take responsibility for mainstreaming gender so that location might not be such a critical factor. She said that a composite process rather than the introduction of one single measure was required.

Responding to a question as to whether there was a goal within the Secretariat to have 50/50 gender equality and a time line for achieving this, Ms Thakur said that the participation by women and men was equally balanced except in middle management, but that the employee staff survey had shown that women felt discrimination in other ways.

In terms of dilution, she noted that the new Strategic Plan 2008–2011 recognised gender as a cross-cutting issue (as well as youth and human rights), and divisions would have to report against gender indicators, leading to more accountability. This should mean more money for gender-related issues in the budget.

Asked for clarification of the role of the CGPMG in offering advice concerning the gender audit since it related to the Secretariat, Ms Thakur responded that the Plan of Action was being implemented by both the Secretariat and member countries. The group was monitoring progress, and that was much more likely to happen if all the divisions of the Secretariat were working to make this happen. She gave the example of the division dealing with enterprise development, saying that if this division mainstreamed gender then more money would go to women and enterprise development.

It was also mentioned that less than 10 per cent of the work of the Secretariat was concerned with gender mainstreaming and that it needed to set an example to member countries. While the audit had suggested that the Gender Section focus attention on gender training and on its location in the Secretariat, the Section needed to balance its internal and external commitments. It therefore wanted the Human Resources Section to take responsibility for training staff in gender, as they did in the case of diversity. The GMS Toolkit was mentioned as offering a framework for creating a system in which all key stakeholders took responsibility for gender mainstreaming.

In response to a question as to whether there was space in the Strategic Plan for more collaboration with the Commonwealth Foundation, Ms Thakur said that civil society was recognised in both the Plan of Action and Strategic Plan as an effective partner, and it was a partner in both developing and implementing the Plan of Action. There was a unique relationship with the Commonwealth Foundation and an awareness of the need to work closely with civil society.

Wrapping up the session, the Chair suggested that since the findings of the audit reflected similar situations in member countries, NWMs could use it to improve their own work.

3 Implementing the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Ambassador Hazelle introduced this session by saying that it would focus on recommendations for the way forward towards implementing the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework (see Annex A-II). She reported that the Secretariat had sent out the Framework and the following three questions to NWMs:

- i What do NWMs see as the challenges in the implementation of the Framework?
- ii Which three actions would you prioritise to overcome the challenges identified?
- iii Harmonisation with other reporting processes has been a key principle in the development of the Framework. Apart from choosing data sources that are already being used in other processes, do you have any other suggestions for harmonisation of reporting?

She then invited Dr Auxilia Ponga, Adviser, Gender Section, to provide an overview of the feedback received.

Dr Ponga began by saying that only 14 responses had been received (11 in time for inclusion in the matrix that had been circulated), which indicated the need for better communication. She then presented highlights from these. In terms of challenges, NWMs had identified lack of capacity building for staff, lack of a gender policy, weak GMS networking, lack of authority and weak status of NWMs, and resource constraints. There were also a number of issues related to data, including the absence of baseline data or data for measuring trends, the lack of disaggregated data, gender not being mainstreamed in bureaux of statistics, the lack of a gender dimension in HIV/AIDS data (such as the proportion of anti-retroviral drugs going to women) and the need for measurable outcomes. NWMs had also noted problems with integrating M&E into existing plans and programmes; lack of accountability for M&E and gender in general; lack of awareness and appreciation of gender in other ministries; tight deadlines, with several other plans/programmes to report on, and bureaucratic procedures; and the need for harmonisation to reduce the burden on already overstretched NWMs.

In response to the second question, it had been suggested that capacity building was needed to strengthen or establish NWMs, training should be provided for the public sector in gender mainstreaming so that this was not seen as solely the NWM's responsibility, and a phased approach should be taken to working with institutions (for example, starting work with three ministries and then expanding this to five) and resource mobilisation. Other suggestions were that data collection should be improved from a gender perspective; there should be policy dialogue and strengthened collaboration, especially with bureaux of statistics; there should be a database accessible to all; alternative data sources should be agreed on, since some national statistics offices might not have the data requested; annual plans and budgets should be 'engendered'; and reporting mechanisms and communication channels should be created/improved.

On the issue of harmonisation of reporting, responses had been to get to know existing reporting frameworks better, with the relevant dates, etc.; to improve national/regional/international mechanisms for reporting; donor harmonisation; and institutionalising accountability mechanisms for gender equality (so that statistics were disaggregated for all areas).

Dr Ponga suggested that the meeting might discuss the nature of indicators and the process for reporting where data were not available; harmonisation with other reporting instruments; implementation of the M&E Framework regionally, not just at national level; reporting progress to the UN, Commonwealth Secretariat and regional organisations; and clear steps to actualise the M&E process in member States so that by 2010 they could report for the mid-term review of the Plan of Action.

The Chair suggested also opening the discussion to other issues, and wondered whether there had been so few responses due to lack of interest or lack of capacity.

Plenary Discussion

Participants agreed that the problem was not lack of commitment but lack of capacity and/or the fact that NWMs were overburdened. They received many forms and not all could be completed. A suggestion came from civil society that the questionnaire might have been extended beyond NWMs so that civil society could have added its voice. It was also suggested that the Secretariat could link in with other agencies working in particular regions to avoid duplication and wasted resources. However, it was stressed that the Secretariat should retain its own identity in areas important to the Commonwealth and that countries should look for Commonwealth commonalities for training, technical assistance, etc. through the Secretariat.

The need for NWMs to be realistic about their inability to fulfil all their responsibilities was raised along with the suggestion that they needed to prioritise. Some issues, such as peace and security, were a priority for some countries but not for others so they should look at what was relevant for them. Focusing on one or two things could start the process moving forward.

Data issues were said to be very critical, and the problem was raised of even collecting the data let alone getting it disaggregated. Lack of collaboration at national level was seen as a barrier to obtaining the data needed, and the question arose of how to address the challenges of finding the authority to demand data from other ministries. It was also noted that civil society did a lot of work on the ground and might have useful data. The recommendation was made that both quantitative and qualitative indicators could be included. The latter could be specifically embedded in the evaluation to measure things such as the effects on the wider society of increased numbers of women in leadership positions (including, for example, of female judges on gender-based violence).

Several participants stressed the need to synchronise reporting to the Secretariat with other reports. However, it was also pointed out that the 21 indicators for member countries to report on in the M&E Framework did not add additional work as they were part of the reporting already being done for the

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform for Action, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), regional plans, etc. In particular, it was highlighted that the MDGs were priorities taken from existing plans and programmes and thus should already be part of everyday activities. The comment was made that the tools for reporting on CEDAW had come from the Secretariat.

As to the question of developing a reporting tool, such as a questionnaire, Ambassador Hazelle offered a new take on the acronym KISS: Keep It Simple, Stakeholders. She described her own solution of putting together a matrix of all reporting responsibilities to the various bodies as a way of clarifying what information was required and for whom. Such a matrix was agreed to be useful, as well as continuous M&E in order for countries to know what they had spent previous resources on and what the outcomes had been. It was emphasised that capacity building and training were needed to assist with harmonisation, both for NWMs and for civil society. The Secretariat indicated that regional meetings were already being planned for capacity building, starting with one in April in Antigua and Barbuda.

The question of what year to use as a benchmark in order to reflect the current situation in a country was discussed. While the M&E Framework gave 2007 as the baseline, flexibility was urged since countries had different periods of data collection. It was suggested that the timeframe should rather be 2003–2007, with countries providing data from the latest year available. In addition, since the Secretariat was trying to work in harmony with the UN and other agencies, 2005 could be used as a baseline by those countries that had information from that year's reporting on the Beijing Platform for Action. However, the need to continuously collect data was stressed as older data might hide or exaggerate improvement.

It was agreed that a date should be set for receiving the reporting instrument and that the Secretariat would set out a timeframe so that countries were able to report by 2009. This was important if the CGPMG was going to look at the reports in 2010. It was also suggested that the CEDAW guidelines developed by the Secretariat could be used to develop the instrument. The point was made that some indicators were long term and some might need to be phased. For example, it might not be possible to report on changes in customary practices by 2010. In addition, progress in increasing the number of women in politics might depend on whether there had been an election during the reporting period.

The suggestion was also made that there should be a scheme for civil society organisations (CSOs) to put together shadow reports since although civil society was part of the CGPMG, progress reports would be submitted by NWMs. Concern was expressed, however, that shadow reports could be divisive, and it was urged that they should not be combative and negative but rather complementary to the government reports. It was also pointed out that the aim was to have civil society and government working together on one report, so a shadow report would only be required if civil society was not involved in preparing the official report. It was proposed that shadow reports be regional rather than national. The suggestion was also made that civil society would be better able to assist NWMs if there was a more formal framework for engagement and they worked in further partnership for reporting.

Other issues that came up in the discussion included the need for the members of the CGPMG to communicate back to the region they were representing, and it was suggested that one way of doing this was to get together in regional groupings during the annual New York meetings. The need for countries to share information and best practices was also underlined. In addition, it was noted that the theme of International Women's Day that year was investing more for women and the girl child and that it was important to stress the costs of not doing this. Reference was made to the fact that one of the indicators in the Framework related to gender-responsive budgets and that Finance Ministers had committed to reporting every two years on their progress in implementing these. It was suggested that NWMs could use this commitment to move forward in this area.

Concluding this session, Ambassador Hazelle summarised the recommendations emerging as follows:

- Increasing awareness of the Plan of Action among other ministries;
- Using a matrix that looked at a variety of reports to simplify reporting procedures;
- Providing a format that made reporting simple and straightforward;
- Having regional shadow reports;
- Capacity building to make the framework successful, including training workshops on formulating/writing reports;
- Adding qualitative indicators and data on the impacts of women's leadership on the wider society;
- Sharing models of good practice at national and regional levels;
- Assessing whether countries had a gender policy or national plan of action on gender.

4 Update on the Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security

Ambassador Hazelle reminded the meeting that the terms of reference (TORs) of the Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security had been adopted at 8WAMM and that a request for nominations to the Group had been sent out to all NWMs in December 2007 with a deadline of 21 January 2008. A reminder had also been sent on 15 January. The request had drawn attention to the fact that membership could come from ministries of women's affairs, foreign affairs, justice, defence, security or reconstruction, reintegration and rehabilitation (where these existed), CSOs and eminent persons and regional stakeholders with expertise in this area.

However, Ambassador Hazelle went on to note that there had been only 16 acknowledgements/responses and that the majority of these had nominated NWMs. She said this raised concerns since NWMs were already overburdened and there seemed to be a belief that everything to do with gender at the national level was the responsibility of the NWM. Moreover, it had been intended that membership of the Group would represent a wide cross-section of expertise. She reminded those present that getting agreement on the Group's TORs had been a painstaking process and suggested that a proposal could be taken to the Consultation on the following day on the need for further nominations. She felt that given the amount of conflict in member States, and the fact that women and children were those most affected, the issue needed to be given the importance it deserved.

Plenary Discussion

It was generally agreed that all nominations should not come from NWMs as wider expertise was required. Representation should be broad-based and cover not only the different regions but also civil society. Suggestions from the participants included that nominations from other areas should be specifically requested and that the Gender Section might ask the other divisions in the Secretariat to use their connections to obtain nominations.

There was some discussion of the budget for the Working Group, since the TORs talked about ensuring adequate resources. The Secretariat mentioned the possibility of raising outside funds. The Chair suggested that this should not be necessary since the Group had been approved at the highest level.

It was agreed to take the issue of nominations to the Consultation on the following day and recommend the extension of the date for receiving these to 31 March to allow countries to add nominees from other areas beyond the NWM for more balanced representation. Once established, the Working Group should report in 2009 at the meeting of NWMs in New York.

5 Membership of CGPMG and Election of Chair

Ms Thakur went over the rotation process for membership of the CGPMG. It had been decided the previous year that this would be alphabetical and two members from each region would be rotated out (see Annex A-IV for details). The new composition of the CGPMG would be:

Africa/Europe: Botswana, Cameroon, Cyprus and Ghana.

Asia: Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Maldives and Singapore.

Caribbean/Canada: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, The Bahamas and Belize.

Pacific: Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga.

Ms Thakur noted that the new Chair would be elected by those members who were carrying over and the new members who were present. The Commonwealth Foundation indicated that three of the regional civil society members would remain (Africa/Europe: Women in Law and Development Africa – WILDAF; Caribbean/Canada: Development Alternatives With Women for a New Era – DAWN; and the Pacific: Pacific Foundation for the Advancement of Women – PACFAW). A new member would come in from Asia.

Given the concerns of some participants that alphabetical rotation did not allow for representation from the different sub-regions, it was agreed to revisit the membership process the following year.

Both Bangladesh and Botswana were nominated to chair the CGPMG. After considerable discussion and in the spirit of consensus, it was agreed that Botswana would serve from 2008–2009 and Bangladesh from 2009–2010.

ANNEXES

A-I	Agenda
A-II	The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
A-III	Update on the Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security
A-IV	Proposed CGPMG Membership Rotation
A-V	Participant List

Annex A-I: Agenda

0900 – 0930 **REGISTRATION**

0930 – 0945 **Welcome, Introductions and Opening Remarks**

- Opening remarks, Commonwealth Secretariat
- Objectives and anticipated outcomes of the meeting
H E Ms Rosalyn Hazelle, Chair of the CGPMG

0945 – 1045 **Briefing on Commonwealth Secretariat Gender Audit**
Commonwealth Secretariat

Plenary Discussion

1045 – 1115 **TEA/COFFEE**

1115 – 1245 **Monitoring and Evaluation Framework**

- Update by Gender Section
- Discussion and agreement on way forward

1245 – 1300 **Update on Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security**
H E Ms Rosalyn Hazelle, Chair of the CGPMG

Plenary Discussion

1300 – 1330 **Membership of CGPMG and Election of Chair**

- Update by Commonwealth Secretariat
- Election of Chair
- Summing up

1330 **LUNCH**

Annex A-II: The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework*

In the Framework each of the four critical areas of the Plan of Action is listed, along with corresponding indicators and data sources.

The core principles for the design and operation of the framework were set out by the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG) during its meeting in February 2007. The Monitoring Group decided to focus on a few core areas, mindful of the special role of the Commonwealth and aiming to supplement and add value to current reporting, but avoiding undue burden on States.

Core principles set out were as follows:

- To ensure the Plan of Action is implemented effectively.
- To assist in accelerating and focusing implementation on core areas of greatest importance.
- To enable reliable reporting on progress.

The Monitoring Group also set out the parameters of the M&E Framework as follows:

- The performance of the Commonwealth Secretariat will be assessed through a separate process.
- A simple, feasible and manageable monitoring framework is essential.

The distinctiveness of each country will be respected and no internationally comparative results will be expected.

- Feedback from civil society is an essential component of the monitoring and evaluation approach.
- Harmonisation with all other key processes and frameworks is crucial, reducing duplication and the burden on any stakeholders.
- The focus will be on outcome/results measures, and measures that indicate progress towards the achieving of the outcomes by 2010.
- The framework will not be dependent upon any additional data collection.
- About three indicators should be developed for each area of focus.

In terms of selection of intended outcomes, the Monitoring Group focused on areas that would be indicative of the most material significance for the status of women and girls.

Following this guidance, the indicators in the following Framework have been selected that both demonstrate progress towards gender equality and the status of women and girls and are readily available from international sources.

Operationalising the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

National plan of action

The CGPMG has advised that all countries should have a national action plan to report against the programme of action in the areas specified in the M&E Framework.

*Extracted from 'Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015 (adopted at 8WAMM)'. Available at <www.thecommonwealth.org/files/175420/>.

Plan of Action Critical Area I: Gender, Democracy, Peace and Conflict		
Intended outcomes by 2010	Indicators	Data source
<p>Leadership, political representation and participation in decision-making Women fully and equally participating in leadership in all sectors and levels</p>	<p>1. Percentage increase in the proportion of seats held by women in parliament in a. lower or single house b. upper house, and c. local bodies/authorities</p> <p>2. At least 30 per cent of decision-making positions at all levels occupied by women in the public and private sectors</p>	<p>WISTAT Inter-Parliamentary Union</p> <p>World's Women UNDP UNIFEM Inter-Parliamentary Union African Development Bank</p>
<p>Peace and conflict resolution Effective participation of women in conflict resolution, peace processes and reconstruction, with all human rights for women and children protected</p>	<p>1. Existence of national plans of action on UN Security Council Resolution 1325</p> <p>2. Percentage of women in governmental peace-related decision-making committees and bodies</p> <p>3. Percentage of military observers, peacekeeping troops and civilian troops, sent by troop contributing countries, who are female</p>	<p>OSAGI National Statistics Office</p> <p>OSAGI</p> <p>OSAGI</p>

Plan of Action Critical Area 2: Gender, Human Rights and Law		
Intended outcomes by 2010	Indicators	Data source
<p>Violence against women and children Violence against women and girls is eliminated</p>	<p>1. Reported incidence of rape/defilement and percentage of reported cases resulting in prosecution</p> <p>2. Reported incidence of domestic violence and percentage of reported cases resulting in prosecution</p>	<p>WISTAT</p> <p>National Machineries National Statistics</p>
<p>Protection of rights in law Women's rights are protected, not only in the existence of laws, but in the effective implementation of these laws</p>	<p>1. Existence of laws prescribing specific legal action against domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape/defilement and sex trade</p> <p>2. Codification of customary laws that discriminate against women</p>	<p>CEDAW</p> <p>National Women's Machineries National Statistics</p>

Plan of Action Critical Area 3: Gender, Poverty Eradication and Economic Empowerment

Intended outcomes by 2010	Indicators	Data source
<p>Access to economic resources, capital, land and information technology All women have access to the fundamental resources essential for economic well-being</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Existence of enacted laws on equal pay and against labour discrimination for reasons of sex 2. Women's labour force participation (as a percentage) and percentage of employees in agriculture and manufacturing services sectors who are female 3. Percentage of land owners who are female in rural and urban sectors 	<p>ILO National Women's Machineries</p> <p>ILO/ National Statistics</p> <p>National Women's Machineries National Statistics</p>
<p>Macro-economic conditions are gender sensitive Women are empowered through a systematic system of resourcing and planning which ensures resources are allocated to them</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Existence of policies to provide access to credit to self-employed women and women entrepreneurs 2. Percentage increase in women's access to credit 3. Existence of gender-responsive budgeting 	<p>National Women's Machineries National Statistics</p>
<p>Maternal mortality Reduction of maternal mortality by three quarters (2015)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Percentage of births attended by skilled birth attendants 2. Number of emergency obstetric care functional units per 500,000, with appropriate figures for smaller nations 	<p>National Women's Machineries National Statistics</p>
<p>Education Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education 	<p>UNESCO National Statistics</p>

Plan of Action Critical Area 4: Gender and HIV/AIDS		
Intended outcomes by 2010	Indicators	Data source
HIV/AIDS – gender sensitive policy Women and those who care for those with HIV/AIDS receive appropriate, accessible and quality services for HIV/AIDS including preventive services	1. Estimated number of women living with HIV/AIDS (females/100 males)	UNAIDS UNFPA
	2. Percentage of HIV-positive pregnant women receiving anti-retroviral prophylaxis	UNAIDS National Statistics
	3. Percentage of women in vulnerable groups, as defined by national policies, accessing HIV/AIDS counselling, testing and educational programmes	UNAIDS National Statistics

Note on data sources

The World's Women 2005 (DESA, 2006) includes an extensive discussion of gender equality-related data availability in all of the areas in the M&E Framework, by region. This was the main reference point in deciding which indicators to select. The advantage of having this publication to hand is that it was possible to select indicators for which data is most readily available for Commonwealth countries. A further useful global resource has been the UN Statistical Division Inventory of Gender Indicators (UNSD, 2006).

There are a number of data gaps in international statistics in key areas of the Commonwealth Secretariat PoA. For example, in relation to data on violence against women, *The World's Women 2005* notes (DESA, 2006: 69):

Since the Fourth World Conference on Women, as a result of national and international resolve to improve data concerning violence against women, there have been considerable improvements in statistics on intimate partner violence, that is, violence perpetrated by an intimate partner (whether married or cohabiting), a boyfriend or a former intimate partner or boyfriend. However, reliable statistics on many other forms of violence against women, including trafficking in women and girls and violence against women by agents of the state, remain scarce. This lack of data continues to be a concern at the national, regional and international levels.

Similarly, in relation to employment data the same publication notes (ibid: 47):

On the basis of what has been reported to the international organizations, it is apparent that the worldwide availability of statistics on economic activity, employment and unemployment is far from satisfactory, with slightly more than half of all countries providing data by sex and only roughly a third of all countries doing so with fair regularity.

Nonetheless, employment data need to be taken as a proxy for economic well-being, given the scarcity of data for other indicators such as access to finance or land ownership. A paper by Honohan (2005), prepared for an international workshop on 'Data on the Access of Poor and Low Income People to Financial Services' notes a number of gaps in data in this area.

Geographically, data are less available for African countries, particularly those in conflict, and for the

Pacific region and small island States. Data are also not available in any systematic fashion below the national level, in particular in countries of the global South.

Ideally, indicators would be broken down into different groups of women, in particular to attempt to capture the situation of marginalised groups such as indigenous women, poor rural women and women living with HIV/AIDS. However, these groups are not well covered in statistical systems, as DESA (2006) notes, so disaggregation may for the time being remain a desire rather than a reality.

Establishing baselines and measurement systems

2007 should be the year when baselines are established for all of the indicators in the M&E Framework. Once the baseline is established, data can be collected on a basis to be decided by the CGPMG. The situation in 2010 for each indicator would then be measured against the baseline.

References

Honohan, P 2005, 'Measuring Micro-finance Access: Building on Existing Cross-country Data', World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 3606, World Bank, Washington, DC.

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) Statistics Division 2006, *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics*, United Nations, New York.

United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) 2006, 'Meeting Announcement: Inter-Agency and Expert Group Meeting on the Development of Gender Statistics', United Nations, New York.

Annex A-III: Update on the Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security

Background

At the 8th triennial meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs held in Kampala, Uganda in June 2007, Ministers unanimously agreed to the establishment of a Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security. The Working Group was to be constituted on the basis of nominations from Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs and the Commonwealth Secretariat and was required to provide a progress report to the NWM meeting in 2008.

Progress

In accordance with the terms of reference (ToRs), a request for nominations was sent to all Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs on 6 December 2007 with a deadline of 21 January 2008. Furthermore, a reminder was sent on 15 January 2008 requesting action on nominations for the Working Group. In total, only 16 acknowledgements and responses were received. A breakdown of nominations received so far is as follows:

Africa/Europe:	9 nominations, 8 with CVs
Asia:	2 nominations with CVs
Caribbean/Canada:	1 nomination with CV; 1 acknowledgement
Pacific:	1 nomination with CV; 2 acknowledgements

The request for nominations drew attention to the fact that membership may be drawn from Ministries Responsible for Women's Affairs and Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Internal Affairs, Justice, Defence, Security or Reconstruction, Reintegration and Rehabilitation (where they exist) and civil society organisations, including eminent persons and regional stakeholders with expertise in this area. The letter had clarified that nominations from civil society organisations would be co-ordinated through the Commonwealth Foundation. An analysis of the nominations received shows that the majority of nominees are from NWMs.

Given that the ToRs mandate the Secretary-General to appoint the Working Group based on the nominations from Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs and the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Gender Section will now submit a list of potential nominees to the Secretary-General to constitute the Working Group. In doing so, the list will reflect the diversity of representation that has been provided for.

Should the meeting consider that more time be provided to allow for nominations from more governments and, in particular, for wider sectoral coverage, then it would need to agree on a deadline extension for nominations, after which the Secretary-General will proceed to constitute the Working Group in accordance with the ToRs. The meeting may also like to recommend to the meeting of NWMs that the Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security should provide a progress report to the meeting of NWMs in 2009.

Annex A-IV: Proposed CGPMG Membership Rotation

Current composition of the CGPMG from Feb 2007	Members to be rotated out in Feb 2008	New members to join the CGPMG in Feb 2008	New composition of the CGPMG from Feb 2008
<p>Africa/Europe</p> <p>Botswana, Cameroon, Uganda, United Kingdom</p> <p>Asia</p> <p>Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalem, India, Sri Lanka</p> <p>Caribbean/Canada</p> <p>Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis</p> <p>Pacific</p> <p>Australia, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa</p> <p>Regional CSOs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Africa/Europe – Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF) • Asia – Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) • Caribbean/Canada – Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) • Pacific – Pacific Foundation for the Advancement of Women (PACFAW) 	<p>Uganda, United Kingdom</p> <p>India, Sri Lanka</p> <p>Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis</p> <p>Australia, Kiribati</p>	<p>Cyprus, Ghana</p> <p>Maldives, Singapore</p> <p>Barbados, Belize</p> <p>Solomon Islands, Tonga</p>	<p>Botswana, Cameroon, Cyprus, Ghana</p> <p>Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalem, Maldives, Singapore</p> <p>Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize</p> <p>Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga</p> <p><i>The new composition of CSOs will be decided by the Commonwealth Foundation.</i></p>

Annex A-V: List of Participants

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B. Report of the Consultation of Commonwealth National Women's Machineries

24 February 2008

**Helmsley Hotel
New York**

1 Opening and Feature Address

1.1 Opening Remarks

The Chair of the Consultation, Mr Ransford Smith, Deputy Secretary-General, Commonwealth Secretariat, warmly welcomed the participants to the consultation, particularly the Chair of the 8th Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (8WAMM), Hon Syda Bbumba, Uganda's Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development. He also acknowledged the other Ministers present, as well as senior officials, civil society, the Chair and members of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG), Ms Rachel Mayanja, Assistant United Nations (UN) Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, other UN colleagues and colleagues from multi-lateral and bilateral agencies.

Mr Smith said that the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015 reflected both a contribution and a commitment to women's rights. He also noted that the 8WAMM theme of 'Financing Gender Equality for Development and Democracy' had special significance in relation to the theme of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on 'Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women'. He highlighted the fact that some of the background papers prepared for 8WAMM had directly contributed to the CSW process, including the Report of the Expert Group Meeting organised by the Division for the Advancement of Women, which had informed planning for the session.

Mr Smith went on to remind those present that the Consultation was an annual event that enabled the Commonwealth to caucus on the eve of the CSW, share information and exchange ideas. He summarised the aims of the meeting as to review the outcomes of 8WAMM; to consider the report of the CGPMG from its meeting the previous day and issues arising; to move forward on implementing the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework and ensuring harmonisation with other instruments; and to strategise ways to develop and build on the nature of communication between the Commonwealth Secretariat and NWMs. He noted that the meeting would follow the one in six rule for interventions by civil society. After moving for the adoption of the agenda (see Annex B-1), he invited Ms Mayanja to deliver the feature address.

1.2 Feature Address

Ms Mayanja began by saying that it was a great honour for her to have been invited to participate in the Consultation, and she expressed her appreciation to the Commonwealth Secretariat for organising it so well. She also congratulated Hon Syda Bbumba for her excellent job of presiding over 8WAMM, which had produced important outcomes. She indicated that her remarks would focus on the synergies between the outcomes from 8WAMM and the proposed outcomes and expected recommendations from the 52nd Session of the CSW.

Pointing to the similarities between the theme of 8WAMM, 'Financing Gender Equality for Development and Democracy', and that of the CSW, 'Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women', Ms Mayanja stressed that this was not accidental. Rather, she said that women were aware that despite the adoption of policy commitments to the elimination of discrimination, to equal political, economic and social opportunities and to respect for their human rights, these promises were not being translated into concrete action. In fact, the situation for many women was worsening. She quoted the *Millennium Development Goals Report 2007* as reporting that the benefits of economic growth in the developing world had been shared unequally and that the worse off were 'often, those living in rural areas, children of mothers with no formal education and the poorest households'.

According to Ms Mayanja, world leaders had acknowledged at the 2005 World Summit that progress for women was progress for all, but this profound statement had not been supported by a similarly profound political commitment. Despite a growing body of evidence demonstrating that gender equality made good economic sense and calls for mainstreaming a gender perspective in all economic and public finance processes, adequate resources had not been systematically allocated. She said that the need for resources had been underlined in the *Millennium Development Goals Report 2007*, which had indicated that rapid and large-scale progress towards the MDGs was possible when ‘strong government leadership and policies and strategies that effectively target the needs of the poor are combined with adequate financial and technical support...’

Ms Majanja then identified what she described as seven recurring messages in the discourse on financing of gender equality work:

- 1 Sustained development was essential and integral to the achievement of gender equality.
- 2 Investment in women and gender equality had to be a priority because it had a multiplier effect on productivity, efficiency and sustained economic growth, which in turn contributed to the achievement of democracy, peace, security and development.
- 3 Strong NWMs were needed to achieve gender equality and underpin other economic and social development goals.
- 4 Tracking of financial resources both at the national level and within the UN system should be given priority attention, with evaluation and audit reports including resource allocation.
- 5 Strong partnerships among member States, with inter-governmental bodies, the entities of the UN, financing institutions, civil society and the private sector were required to galvanise resources for gender equality work.
- 6 Incorporation of a gender perspective in the new aid modalities would enable provision of resources for gender mainstreaming work.
- 7 Mainstreaming gender in all gender equality policies, strategies and plans and incorporating it into overall national development strategies and sector plans and budgets remained an essential tool for achieving gender equality.

Ms Mayanja reminded participants that 8WAMM had preceded the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), which had also taken place in Kampala. This had provided an opportunity to sensitise Heads of Government to the urgent and critical need to finance gender equality work. She said that this process was continuing as all Commonwealth member States were either members or observers in the CSW. The Commission’s deliberations were expected to lead to new policy outcomes on the gender implications of financing for development that would be incorporated in the documentation for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Doha in November 2008.

In addition, Ms Mayanja highlighted the fact that that the current year offered a number of other entry points for systematically stressing the linkages between development, the achievement of gender equality and the availability of predictable and sustainable resources. These included the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) XII in Accra in April, which provided an opportunity to raise the question of incorporating a gender perspective in trade and ensuring adequate resources to gender equality work in this sector; the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra in September, which should look at the issues of how resources were allocated to gender equality work and the need for tracking, evaluating and reporting; and a high level meeting on the MDGs to be held by the UN Secretary-General in September in New York, which offered another chance to insist on moving from the rhetoric that gender equality was necessary to achieve all development goals to the political will to allocate the required resources for development – in particular for achieving the targets under MDG 3 on gender equality. Ms Mayanja also indicated that governments should ensure that a gender perspective was fully incorporated in the preparations for and outcome of the Monterrey follow-up

conference in Qatar. She suggested that NWMs could play an important role in co-operation with other ministries, in particular finance and planning, and warned that the existing gaps between policy commitments and implementation would persist, if not widen, without predictable and sustained resources.

Ms Mayanja urged participants to bear in mind the opportunity presented by this series of meetings and to seize the moment to ensure a good outcome. She concluded her address by wishing those present a fruitful and successful consultation. (The complete text is at Annex B-II.)

Plenary Discussion

There were a number of comments and questions from participants. The idea expressed of ‘moving from rhetoric to action’ struck a chord, as it was pointed out that the same issues had been discussed for a number of years without action. Both mobilising women at the grassroots to take part in local government and having women with real decision-making power at the national level were seen to be critical, as well as increasing the involvement of women at the international level. Concerns were expressed about women’s lack of participation in trade negotiations, leading Ms Mayanja to suggest that the Ministers look at whether their own governments had sent women to trade negotiations or had examined the impact of trade on women in their country. She asked how many countries had put trade issues on the agenda and protected women from being squeezed out by globalisation.

It was reiterated that the current year was important because of the emphasis on gender financing and the various processes coming up connected to funding. In response to a comment that overseas development assistance (ODA) commitments were not being met and the percentage was actually decreasing, Ms Mayanja said that there was a need for a greater gender perspective in ODA and that a call might be made by the Consultation to affect these processes. She then noted that ODA now often went directly to a country’s budget (as per the Paris Declaration) and wondered whether donors would insist on a percentage being used for gender or follow this issue up with governments. She said that OSAGI [the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women] and OECD-DAC GENDERNET [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-Development Assistance Committee Network on Gender Equality] were currently discussing this issue, calling for tracking the resources – what was going where and how much of it was for gender – and trying to gather information. She suggested that the meeting might also want to take up this issue, since donors were not living up to their commitments and should assign a percentage of funding to gender.

Another issue raised was the deeply rooted cultural challenges to be faced in dealing with the public perception of gender issues. Ms Mayanja advised those present to focus on partnerships to sensitise the community on the need to change its views. In response to a question on how civil society and NWMs could better lobby and advocate to have a greater impact at the upcoming meetings, apart from preparing papers as they were already doing, she stressed the importance of strategising on how to make the best use of opportunities and to unite rather than following separate paths – to have one message, not disparate ones. She said that the negotiations on financing were inter-governmental, so civil society would need to partner with government and have the same agenda.

Asked to provide an update on the gender architecture at the UN, Ms Mayanja said that although the High Level Panel had recommended that this be reformed, there had been little progress, perhaps because the recommendation had ‘put the cart before the horse’. New discussions were focusing on what was wrong with the current system in order to develop the mandate for a new entity. These were taking place at the UN under two appointed facilitators, one from Ireland and the other from the United Republic of Tanzania.

2 Briefing on 8WAMM Follow-up

2.1 Report by the 8WAMM Chair

The Hon Syda Bbumba, Chair of the 8th Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (8WAMM) and Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Uganda, began her report by thanking her fellow Ministers for their support, contributions and participation and the Commonwealth Secretariat for its guidance during the successful hosting of both 8WAMM and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in her country. She said that hosting 8WAMM had been beneficial for Uganda in several ways, including strengthening strategic alliances among women's organisations, increasing the visibility of the NWM and gender issues and helping the country evaluate its commitments to the Gender Plan of Action.

Hon Bbumba went on to say that the fact that the theme of the CSW bore a close relationship to that of 8WAMM provided a strategic opportunity for the Commonwealth to demonstrate strong leadership on key issues that were central to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. The priorities of focus, as stated in the Kampala Communiqué and the Kampala Statement to CHOGM, were tracking the money for gender equality; financing NWMs for effective gender mainstreaming; financing HIV/AIDS interventions, particularly as women were most affected as carers, nurses, widows, etc; promoting peace and democracy; reducing maternal mortality, promoting girls' education and eliminating violence against women and girls; and strengthening partnerships for gender equality, in particular partnerships with men and civil society organisations. She appealed to the participants to continue to advocate and enlist support for increased financial and human resources to address these issues. She also stressed the need to ensure operationalisation of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework adopted at 8WAMM, working closely with the Secretariat.

Hon Bbumba then described some of the actions taken by the Government of Uganda to follow up the recommendations of 8WAMM. These included working closely with partner agencies and civil society to mainstream gender into the National Development Framework; introducing a Prosperity for All Programme to establish savings and credit cooperatives in every sub-county to channel financial services to rural areas and especially to poor women; continuing to implement programmes to address HIV and AIDS, such as voluntary counselling and testing and free antiretroviral therapy for infected persons; and putting in place various programmes to address gender-based violence (although these currently only covered 10 per cent of the country due to resource constraints).

In conclusion, Hon Bbumba reaffirmed Uganda's commitment to the Commonwealth and global gender agenda, to systematically following up on resolutions and to making every contribution possible to advance their shared vision and common goals. (The Minister's full report is at Annex B-III.)

2.2 Update from the Commonwealth Secretariat

Ms Sarojini Ganju Thakur, Head of Gender Section, briefed the meeting on developments since 8WAMM, including advocacy (carrying the message) and activities (implementing the Plan of Action), and also discussed the findings of a gender audit conducted at the Secretariat and the challenges and forward-looking agenda.

2.2.1 Advocacy since 8WAMM

In terms of the outcome/message highlights from 8WAMM, Ms Thakur noted that these had been covered by Hon Bbumba and said that she only wished to also mention the establishment of the Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security. A report of the meeting had recently

been sent out to NWMs. She stressed that the communiqués from CHOGM and the Finance Ministers Meeting (FMM) offered critical opportunities as both these groups had recognised the importance of allocating adequate resources for the implementation of agreed international, national and regional commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment (see Annexes B-IV and B-V). CHOGM had focused on the importance of gender-responsive budgets (GRBs) and other gender analysis tools for tracking the money, and Finance Ministers had committed to biennial reporting on GRBs. They had called for the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in September 2008 to incorporate a specific focus on gender equality and women's empowerment in the aid effectiveness agenda. The theme of the FMM had been climate change, and it had committed to taking 'a gender-sensitive approach to integrating sustainable development and climate change into all levels of planning and decision-making'.

Ms Thakur reiterated the point that background papers prepared for 8WAMM had fed into and complemented the UN CSW process, with the Report of the Expert Group on Financing Gender Equality drawing on the papers on micro-credit and GRBs. In addition, the UN Secretary-General's report for agenda item 3 of the CSW drew on some of the Secretariat's work on GRBs.

2.2.2 Implementing the Plan of Action

The next part of Ms Thakur's report looked at highlights of the implementation of the Plan of Action by the Gender Section since 8WAMM in the four critical areas of its work: gender, democracy, peace and conflict; gender, human rights and law; gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment; and gender and HIV/AIDS. In the first area, there had been activities towards establishing the Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security; a regional workshop for southern Africa on the role of national women's parliamentary caucuses, held in Swaziland in December 2007; planning for strategy workshops for women in leadership in Africa and the Caribbean to be held in 2008; follow-up action in Maldives on women in parliament; and work on a forthcoming publication on women's participation in the electoral process. In the area of gender, human rights and the law, the Section was working on the theme of gender, culture and the law through regional colloquia. One such meeting for South Asia had been held in Dhaka in October 2007 and another was scheduled for southern and eastern Africa in Namibia in April. A review of Caribbean Community (CARICOM) model legislation on gender equality had been commissioned and would be presented at the Law Ministers Meeting. A book on indigenous women's rights had also been commissioned as well as a second volume of case law on women's rights.

Ms Thakur said that one of the principal focus areas in the third critical area – gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment – had been gender and trade, and the Section had raised external funding for this from the UK Department for International Development (DFID). A fourth regional capacity-building workshop for Southern Africa had been held on Gender, Trade Policy and Export Promotion in July 2007 in Namibia. There had also been an extension to the original DFID project, where in collaboration with a civil society partner, One World Action, the gender impact of Economic Partnership Agreements was being assessed in three regions: Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and the Caribbean. In addition, embedding processes for capacity building in gender and trade were taking place in India and Uganda; a gender and trade website – www.genderandtrade.org – had been launched at 8WAMM and was getting 30,000 hits a week; and there was now a bi-monthly newsletter. Other activities included design workshops held for women artisans in Pakistan in September 2007, which would lead to an exhibition by international designers in London in June 2008; a project to be initiated for Amerindian women in Guyana in the first half of 2008; an advocacy event in conjunction with UNCTAD XII in Ghana in April 2008; and publication of a *Gender and Trade Action Guide*. In the area of GRBs, a progress report had been presented to the FMM in October 2007; a national workshop had been held in India in July 2007 with some 52 ministries; and there was a collaborative agreement with UNDP on GRBs and education in Sindh, Pakistan. *Mainstreaming Gender in Social Protection for the Informal Economy* by Naila Kabeer had been published in January 2008, with copies sent to all NWMs.

In the area of gender and HIV/AIDS, Ms Thakur highlighted a South Asia policy dialogue convened in Colombo in August 2007; technical assistance on mainstreaming gender in regional responses in CARICOM countries and funding for a Caribbean multi-agency initiative on gender mainstreaming in HIV/AIDS policy; support for the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS in eastern and southern Africa; and a pan-Commonwealth study on women's unpaid work in HIV care and support (which was part of the theme for CSW 2009).

Ms Thakur went on to describe work carried out in the area of gender, public sector and governance. This included operationalising the M&E Framework; mainstreaming gender training for the public sector and within the Secretariat (which she called 'a work in progress'); planning for regional workshops on strengthening NWMs (in the Caribbean in April and Africa in May); and an upcoming publication on *Promoting Gender Equality in the Public Sector: The Role of Training Institutions*. Another priority area was girls' education, and the findings of a pan-Commonwealth study on gender analysis of classroom and other processes had been shared in a workshop, leading to action in four countries. In addition, the teacher education curriculum had been reviewed from a gender and HIV/AIDS perspective in three countries; a workshop on indicators for gender-friendly schools had been held in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning and Commonwealth Foundation; and a book on *Gender in Primary and Secondary Education* had been published.

2.2.3 Commonwealth Secretariat gender audit

Ms Thakur then turned to the findings of the Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategy for Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming (2007). She said that it was important for NWMs to know about this as the audit had looked at both the impact of internal gender mainstreaming in the Secretariat as well as the quality and impact of the Secretariat's programmes in member countries. It had been conducted by the Strategic Planning and Evaluation Division through semi-structured interviews, document review, rapid panel review of projects in the Secretariat and field visits between January 2006 and January 2007. The final report had been submitted in September 2007, with the summary report received the previous week.

On the positive side, Ms Thakur pointed to the findings that the Gender Section had an external influencing role; there was cross-sectoral collaboration with other divisions within the Secretariat; there was high-level commitment from CHOGM and the FMM; and there had been progress towards reaching gender equality in staffing/human resources (though not at middle management levels or in terms of consultants). However, the audit had also found a number of problems or challenges, which included the fact that the Plan of Action was a commitment and not a gender policy for the Secretariat; there was no systematic cross-divisional work and the location of the Gender Section was not geared to this or to outreach within the Secretariat; the concept of gender mainstreaming had been diluted; and there was a lack of gender training and of accountability for including gender in projects and programmes.

Ms Thakur indicated that to effectively mainstream gender, the steps to be taken included developing a clear gender policy; reintroducing a high level steering committee within the Secretariat to oversee mainstreaming; looking at the issue of the location of the Gender Section; enhancing accountability for mainstreaming and integrating this into performance indicators; finding ways of working that encouraged cross-divisional collaboration and focusing more on internal influencing; working towards making countries' primary points of contact more aware of the Plan of Action; working with Human Resources to introduce mandatory and specific gender training for all staff; and introducing tools to improve gender mainstreaming in project preparation, design, documentation and monitoring.

2.2.4 Looking ahead

Ms Thakur finished her presentation by pointing to some of the challenges ahead and setting a forward-

looking agenda. This included operationalisation of the M&E Framework and gender mainstreaming in the Secretariat; the establishment of the Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security; ensuring that the draft Strategic Plan 2008–2012 contained a commitment to gender mainstreaming and included gender as part of the human development programme; improved communication with NWMs; an enhanced resource base through extra-budgetary resources; and planning for 9WAMM, including reviewing the format, priorities and theme.

2.3 Report by the Commonwealth Foundation

Ms Anisha Rajapakse, Programme Manager, Commonwealth Foundation, began by explaining that the Foundation had been set up specifically to support and strengthen civil society's work in the achievement of Commonwealth priorities and that it facilitated the input of civil society organisations into Commonwealth and global processes, ensuring that their voices were heard.

Turning to 8WAMM, Ms Rajapakse stated that the Foundation and the Commonwealth Women's Network had played a key role prior to the meeting in generating interest in the theme of gender equality and financing. The Foundation and the Secretariat had then convened a Partners' Forum just prior to 8WAMM at which civil society deliberated on a number of sub-themes including peace and security, education, health, trade and gender-responsive budgeting. She said that it was extremely heartening that paragraph 23 of the 8WAMM Communiqué had emphasised that 'the challenge of prioritising gender equality can only be addressed effectively through co-ordinated action and genuine partnership with civil society'. She went on to note that the Foundation and civil society had taken the message of 8WAMM to the Commonwealth People's Forum in November 2007, where experiences were shared on the effectiveness of aid on gender equality work.

Ms Rajapakse then discussed some of the preparations by various actors towards the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in September 2008. These included conducting studies and holding consultations on how the new aid architecture was affecting gender equality work, with the purpose of influencing the review of the Paris Declaration to make it more gender sensitive, and working with NWMs and UN agencies to garner support for advocacy and lobbying activities required to get the gender agenda front and centre at the roundtable meetings during the Forum. She said that what remained to be done was to develop a clear and co-ordinated process to ensure that consensus built over matters of aid effectiveness was tabled at the roundtable meetings as well as to discuss as soon as possible how civil society could work constructively with governments to monitor post-Forum agreements.

Ms Rajapakse also said that the Foundation recognised the need to raise awareness of the Plan of Action for Gender Equality and the M&E Framework in order for civil society organisations to work with NWMs on implementation. These organisations expected the Foundation and the Secretariat to develop a Framework that would engage them in a meaningful way in achieving the Plan's vision and objectives. In conclusion, she introduced the other civil society representatives at the meeting, who came from Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF), Development Alternatives With Women for a New Era (DAWN), the Pacific Foundation for the Advancement of Women (PACFAW) and Participatory Research In Asia (PRIA). (The full statement from the Commonwealth Foundation can be found at Annex B-VI.)

Plenary Discussion

The three presentations were followed by wide-ranging discussions. One theme was that in order to move from talk to action and empower women in communities, it was critically important for NWMs to be adequately funded. It was suggested that NWMs needed to rethink the spaces of engagement in order to make other Ministers – and not just Finance Ministers – aware of the need for mainstreaming gender. The questions included how to ensure that NWMs were well structured and financed and when to push,

pull or cajole. There were also different types of NWMs. and it was suggested that the Secretariat could provide feedback on what was effective and what was not. The comment was made that NWMs had a very valuable and under-utilised body of experts in civil society organisations. These had not been engaged in a structured way, but government plans could not reach the community without them. Ms Thakur said that there would be a workshop in May in Malawi for the southern African region on strengthening NWMs.

Hon Bbumba emphasised that the Kampala Communiqué was not just rhetoric as it had been adopted by CHOGM and was now an integral part of Commonwealth governments' responsibilities. She added that NWMs should impress on Heads of State the need to implement resolutions. Mr Smith added that NWMs should refer to paragraphs 70 and 71 of the CHOGM Kampala Communiqué (see Annex B-IV).

The question of how to engage with finance ministries received considerable attention. Ms Thakur said that the Secretariat had tried to bring NWMs and Finance Ministers closer, and the latter had made a commitment to gender-responsive budgets (GRBs) so NWMs could partner with them on this. It was suggested that representatives of these ministries, or even the Minister of Finance him/herself, should attend the meetings of NWMs in order to appreciate the importance of financing gender equality work. It was also suggested that NWMs engage with finance ministries in a more proactive way, such as through gender training programmes and discussions on GRBs. It was noted that the language from the FMM communiqué, based on 8WAMM, had been used in one country as a basis for dialogue, and that the annual FMM provided an opportunity for engagement as well as perhaps for providing training for Ministers in gender-responsive budgeting.

Participants noted that GRBs was not at the same stage in all countries – running the gamut from no action at all to pilot projects to being the norm. Ms Thakur said that a classification of GRBs had been carried out that looked at where countries were in the process, and that it was a big leap from awareness raising to actually taking action on the budget. She stressed that collaboration was critical. It was pointed out that civil society had helped in building knowledge, developing tools and conducting pilots. In response to the suggestion that case studies could be looked at to see what worked best and how to make progress, Ms Thakur mentioned that a publication on best practices had been produced in the past, but that it might be useful to create a new one to share more recent experiences. The meeting was informed about a study on GRBs around the world that had recently been conducted by the Standing Parliamentary Committee on the Status of Women Canada, the upcoming report on which could be shared. Another suggestion was that experiences could be shared at the regional level. Ms Thakur said that the Secretariat could provide technical assistance. Mr Smith added that there should be activism in the Cabinet to ensure that Ministers reported on GRBs every two years as required.

Other issues discussed included that gender was the responsibility not only of the Gender Section but also of all governments, and Ms Thakur welcomed the suggestion that governments use their influence to ensure that gender was not just a cross-cutting issue in the Secretariat's new Strategic Plan 2008–2011 but was integrated into the overall plan. In response to a question about the Secretariat's work in the Pacific region, she suggested that it might be useful to revive the role of adviser in the Pacific Secretariat. In addition, a call was made for further collaboration between the Secretariat and the Commonwealth Foundation. It was emphasised that partnerships with civil society were essential for making concrete policy proposals and designing effective training.

During the plenary, Hon Dr Esther Byer-Suckoo, Barbados' Minister of Family, Youth Affairs, Sports and the Environment, noted that she was part of a new Government that had not been involved in 8WAMM but that she wanted to recommit her country to hosting 9WAMM in 2010. She asked for suggestions on maximising the time available at that meeting to move things forward. Ms Thakur noted that there would be dialogue on the priorities for 9WAMM and its format.

3 Report on the Meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG)

H E Ambassador Rosalyn Hazelle, Chair of the CGPMG, briefed the meeting on the main issues addressed by and outcomes of the CGPMG meeting held the previous day. She noted that there had been representation from 19 countries and regional representation from civil society. There had been lively participation and discussions, and agreement had been reached in a number of areas, leading to specific recommendations that she would put forward. The objectives of the meeting had been to consider the findings of the Commonwealth Secretariat gender audit, to finalise the recommendations for future steps for the monitoring and evaluation of the Plan of Action, to provide an update on the Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security, and to inform about the new membership and elect a new chair. The Chair's full report is at Annex B-VII.

3.1 Gender Audit

Ambassador Hazelle indicated that she would not go into detail on the gender audit of the Secretariat since this had already been covered by Ms Thakur's presentation. She noted, however, that there had been a general consensus among the members of the CGPMG that many of the problems identified by the audit mirrored those faced by NWMs. Suggestions from the meeting to effectively mainstream gender had included establishing the post of 'Special Adviser on Gender' to champion mainstreaming; strategic thinking on the location of the Gender Section; striking a balance between efforts to ensure that gender was mainstreamed internally and supporting NWMs; and strengthening collaboration with civil society and the Commonwealth Foundation.

3.2 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

On the issue of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework, Ambassador Hazelle said that the Secretariat had presented to the CGPMG the salient points from responses received to a questionnaire sent to NWMs on three key issues: challenges to implementing the Framework; three suggested priority actions to overcome the challenges; and suggestions for harmonising reports. The meeting had discussed a variety of issues, including the type of indicators and process for reporting in the absence of data, harmonisation with other reporting instruments, implementing the Framework and steps to actualise the M&E process. It had also made a number of recommendations: increase awareness of the Plan of Action among other ministries; develop a matrix of all required reports to simplify reporting processes; ensure that the format for monitoring was simple and straightforward; put together regional shadow reports; provide capacity building to assist NWMs in formulating and writing reports; develop qualitative indicators and data to reflect the impact of women's leadership roles on gender equality in the wider society; assess whether countries had a gender policy and a national plan of action for gender equality; and share models of good practice from national and regional levels.

3.3 Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security

Ambassador Hazelle noted that a request for nominations to the Working Group had been sent out to all NWMs in December 2007 with a deadline of 21 January 2008. There had been 16 responses, with the majority of the nominees being representatives of NWMs. She reminded participants that the Working Group was to be constituted of 14 members with experience and expertise in the area of gender, peace and security, based on nominations of Women's Affairs Ministers and the Commonwealth Secretariat. The idea was that members might be drawn from a number of different ministries (for example, foreign affairs, justice, finance or defence) as well as civil society, including eminent persons and regional stakeholders with expertise in the area.

Given the limited sectoral response, Ambassador Hazelle said that the meeting had recommended that the period for nominations be extended to 31 March and had urged Ministers to reconsider their nominations based on the issue and rationale for balanced representation to ensure effectiveness. In addition, the meeting had recommended that the Working Group should provide a progress report to the consultation of NWMs in 2009 and had also urged the Secretariat to consider allocation of adequate resources for the Working Group in its new Strategic Plan 2008–2011.

3.4 Membership and election of chair

Ambassador Hazelle said that the new membership of the CGPMG had been selected by alphabetical rotation. However, the meeting had decided that this did not adequately reflect sub-regional specificities so would revisit the method of determining membership rotation the following year. The new composition of the CGPMG was:

Africa/Europe: Botswana, Cameroon, Cyprus and Ghana.

Asia: Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Maldives and Singapore.

Caribbean/Canada: Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados and Belize.

Pacific: Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga.

Civil society: Women in Law and Development Africa – WILDAF (Africa/Europe), Development Alternatives With Women for a New Era – DAWN (Caribbean/Canada), Pacific Foundation for the Advancement of Women – PACFAW (Pacific) and a new member from Asia to be identified by the Commonwealth Foundation.

She went on to say that both Bangladesh and Botswana had been nominated for the position of chair and that, after lengthy discussion, consensus had been reached ‘in Commonwealth fashion’ that Botswana would serve from 2008–2009 and Bangladesh from 2009–2010.

Ambassador Hazelle then expressed her gratitude to the Secretariat for its facilitating role and for its support, which was critical for the group. She said that as the CGPMG was becoming institutionalised, it was important that it exercised autonomy and that all actions were transparent. She thanked the members of the Group and member States for their support, singling out Uganda for specific mention. She said that the size or culture of the countries might be different, but they were all fighting for a better quality of life for all, especially women and girls.

Mr Smith thanked Ambassador Hazelle for her work over the previous two years and highlighted two specific outcomes from the CGPMG over that period: the M&E Framework and the terms of reference of the Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security.

Plenary Discussion

Participants offered sincere thanks to Ambassador Hazelle for her sterling service as Chair of the CPGMG and welcomed Botswana to this post.

There was general agreement that more countries should respond to the questionnaire on the M&E Framework and that the deadline should therefore be extended. The importance of a simple Framework was emphasised, and Ambassador Hazelle mentioned an acronym that she had formulated and brought to the previous day’s meeting: KISS or Keep It Simple, Stakeholders. It was noted that providing data for the Framework was the work not just of the NWM but also of the rest of government. The suggestion was made that the Framework should include qualitative as well as quantitative indicators.

In response to a question on how a regional shadow report would be co-ordinated and organised, Ambassador Hazelle suggested that the Commonwealth Foundation could get civil society organisations

together through their regional representatives on the CGPMG. She noted that the shadow reports were intended to ensure that civil society had a voice in the Framework.

The location of the Gender Section was said to be important as gender focal points needed to be at the highest level in any institution in order to have power and voice. On the other hand, it was also suggested that commitment and political will could be more important than location.

Mr Smith concluded the session by reiterating his thanks to Ambassador Hazelle and welcoming Botswana as the new Chair of the CGPMG.

4 Working Session on the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015

4.1 Overview by the Commonwealth Secretariat

Dr Auxilia Ponga, Adviser, Gender Section, explained that questionnaires had been sent out to all NWMs asking about challenges, possible actions to tackle these and suggestions for harmonisation of the M&E Framework with other reporting processes. She said, however, that only 14 countries had replied, with 11 responses received in time to add to the matrix that had been circulated. She presented the highlights from these.

In terms of challenges, NWMs had identified lack of capacity building for staff, lack of a gender policy, weak GMS networking, the lack of authority and weak status of NWMs, and resource constraints. Baseline data and data for measuring trends were missing and what data existed were not disaggregated. In addition, gender was not being mainstreamed in bureaux of statistics, information on the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS was not collected and there was a need for measurable outcomes. NWMs had also noted the challenge of how to integrate M&E into existing plans and programmes; a lack of accountability for M&E and gender in general; and a lack of awareness and appreciation of gender in other ministries. Moreover, they faced tight deadlines, with a number of other plans/programmes to report on, and bureaucratic procedures; harmonisation was needed to reduce the burden on NWMs that were already overstretched.

In response to the second question on priority activities, suggestions included capacity building for NWMs and for the public sector in gender mainstreaming (gender sensitisation and training in gender analysis skills). There should be a phased approach to working with institutions and resources needed to be mobilised. Other suggestions were that data collection should be improved from a gender perspective; there should be policy dialogue and strengthened collaboration, especially with bureaux of statistics; there should be a database that was accessible to all; alternative data sources should be agreed on, since some national statistics offices might not have the data requested; gender should be mainstreamed in annual plans and budgets should be 'engendered'; and reporting mechanisms and communication channels should be created/improved.

On the issue of harmonisation of reporting, responses had been for NWMs to study and familiarise themselves with existing reporting frameworks; for improved national/regional/international mechanisms for reporting; for donor harmonisation; and for institutionalising accountability mechanisms for gender equality (so that statistics were disaggregated for all areas).

4.2 Working Groups

Participants then formed five regional groups – Africa/Europe (in two groups due to the number of attendees from the region), Asia, Caribbean/Canada and the Pacific – and were tasked with addressing the same three questions that had been asked in the questionnaire:

- 1 What do NWMs see as the challenges in implementation of the Framework?
- 2 Which three actions would you prioritise to overcome the challenges identified?
- 3 Harmonisation with other reporting processes has been a key principle in the development of the Framework. Apart from choosing data sources that are already being used in other processes, do you have any other suggestions for harmonisation of reporting?

From the report back, it was clear that similar situations existed in all the regions (though it should be noted that the group from the Pacific pointed out that it had limited capacity to speak on behalf of the

region and that most of the issues it raised came from Kiribati). The main points are summarised below.

1 Challenges

- Absence of political will and commitment;
- Lack of appreciation/awareness of the importance of gender;
- Lack of capacity of NWMs and inadequate capacity building;
- Inadequate resources/lack of commitment to allocate resources (human and material);
- Lack of sex-disaggregated data and limited use of existing data;
- Low status (position) of NWMs and limited ability to influence decisions/policies;
- Different reporting time frames (CEDAW, Convention on the Rights of the Child, etc.);
- Cultural barriers;
- Finding the right person to head at the ministerial level.

2 Actions to address challenges

- Effective mobilisation of human and financial resources (training in-house, targeted, departmental);
- Making sex-disaggregated data collection mandatory and maximising utilisation of existing data;
- Partnering with central statistical offices and capacity building (gender indicators and disaggregated data);
- Training and capacity building, with a budget for and donor coordination on training;
- Collaboration with other government agencies/external agencies;
- Sensitisation/advocacy to raise awareness at all levels/cross sectoral;
- Technical assistance from the Commonwealth Secretariat;
- Public education and awareness campaigns through both public and private sectors and school curriculum, media, civil society organisations, etc.

3 Suggestions for harmonisation

- Develop a matrix;
- Borrow from best practices;
- Allow some flexibility on reporting timeframe;
- Have a simple format for reporting;
- Improve collaboration between NWMs and national office of statistics;
- Harmonise country reporting by agencies/international government organisations/etc. (one report).

Dr Ponga said that the session had been very helpful to the Secretariat in terms of coming up with a format.

Plenary Discussion

In the plenary, countries were urged to use current data collection and focus on the most important national indicators. In addition, data should be disaggregated not only by sex but also by other factors such as age and ethnicity. It was also noted that the matrix exercise could provide a synopsis of what needed to be reported on.

The point was made that while NWMs in most countries were ministries, they tended to have additional portfolios such as sports, culture and social services. This was said to be too much for one ministry to handle, especially considering ministries of education, health, etc. only dealt with a single issue.

Dr Ponga said that regional workshops were a useful strategy to strengthen NWMs by looking at their status from a regional perspective and coming up with a regional approach. The purpose would be advocacy to governments and analysis to provide a tool for increasing funding for NWMs.

5 The Commonwealth Secretariat Communication Strategy

Ms Thakur facilitated this session, which focused on ways to develop and build on the nature of communication between the Secretariat and NWMs. She noted that while they got together at meetings such as WAMMs and consultations in New York, it was felt that they did not exchange sufficient information in between. The Secretariat therefore was interested in knowing:

- What NWMs wanted to hear from the Secretariat – what was the purpose?
- What NWMs found most useful and effective and what should be done differently.
- How NWMs would like to communicate with the Secretariat.

Ms Thakur said that titles in the gender mainstreaming series were sent to NWMs, the most recent being *Mainstreaming Gender in Social Protection for the Informal Economy*. The Secretariat also developed capacity-building tools such as the *Gender and Trade Action Guide* that were distributed, and it sent out reports of meetings, reports of workshops and a newsletter (which used to come out once or twice a year). She raised the possibility of having an e-newsletter and showed a mock-up. This would reflect the priority areas and on-going work of the Secretariat and have space for contributions from NWMs and civil society on best practices, events, publications, etc. It might be organised thematically and/or discuss specific issues.

Plenary Discussion

Participants in the plenary expressed their appreciation for the Secretariat's support to NWMs and for the publications, particularly the gender mainstreaming series. There was some support for the e-newsletter. Ms Thakur said that the Secretariat would write to the NWMs about the issue and wait for a response before finalising the strategy since the e-newsletter was envisioned as a two-way process with contributions from NWMs. She also wondered whether NWMs were receiving too much material and whether all of it was really useful.

6 Closing Remarks

The Chair thanked all those present for their active participation, co-operation and spirit of collegiality; Ms Rachel Mayanja for the feature address; the Chair and members of the CGPMG for taking an extra day to develop recommendations for the meeting; and his colleagues from the Commonwealth Foundation and civil society for their valuable contributions. He said that there had been informative and rich discussions. He then identified key matters for follow up as taking forward the gender mandate at the Secretariat, implementing the M&E Framework and establishing the Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security. He noted the importance of tracking finances for gender equality as an overarching theme and reminded participants of the other important meetings on funding issues that year. He said that it was incumbent on those present to see how to use these opportunities most effectively to move the issue forward and advance from rhetoric to action. He noted that the meeting had shared experiences in many areas, including gender-responsive budgeting, and had agreed on the need to involve other governance actors, especially Ministers of Finance, in ensuring that gender was mainstreamed.

Mr Smith wished those returning home for International Women's Day a safe journey and best wishes for their celebrations. He concluded by making reference to a side event that the Secretariat was co-hosting at the CSW on financing gender equality for education and highlighting a new publication on *Gender in Primary and Secondary Education: A handbook for policy-makers and other stakeholders*.

Ambassador Hazelle then thanked the Chair for a job well done and said that she hoped to see continued participation from that level of the Secretariat in future meetings of NWMs.

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Annex B-I: Agenda

0830 – 0900 **REGISTRATION**

0900 – 0915 **Opening Remarks**

Mr Ransford Smith, Deputy Secretary-General, Commonwealth Secretariat, and Chair of the Consultation

0915 – 1000 **Feature Address**

Ms Rachel Mayanja, Assistant UN Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women

Plenary Discussion

1000 – 1100 **Briefing on 8WAMM Follow-up**

- Chair of 8WAMM, Hon Syda Bbumba, Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Uganda
- Commonwealth Secretariat
 - 8WAMM to CHOGM
 - Progress on implementation of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action
 - Update on gender audit
- Commonwealth Foundation on 8WAMM Partners' Forum

Plenary Discussion

1100 – 1130 **TEA/COFFEE**

1130 – 1200 **Plenary Discussion (continued)**

1200 – 1300 **Report on the Meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG)**

H E Ambassador Roslyn Hazelle, Chair of the CGPMG

- Progress on Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
- Rotation of CGPMG Membership
- Update on Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security

Plenary Discussion

1300 – 1400 **LUNCH**

1400 – 1515 **Working Session on Monitoring and Evaluation Framework**

Commonwealth Secretariat

1515 – 1545 **Commonwealth Secretariat Communication Strategy**

Commonwealth Secretariat

1545 – 1600 **Closing Remarks**

Mr Ransford Smith, Deputy Secretary-General, Commonwealth Secretariat, and Chair of the Consultation

1600 **TEA/COFFEE**

Annex B-II: Feature Address

By Ms Rachel Mayanja, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women

Hon Deputy Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Friends and colleagues,

It is a great honour for me to have been invited to participate in the Consultation of Commonwealth Heads of National Women's Machineries. I extend my appreciation to the Commonwealth Secretariat, in particular to Ms Sarojini Thakur, for the excellent organisation of this Consultation.

I was requested to focus my remarks this morning on the synergies between the outcomes from 8WAMM and the proposed outcomes and expected recommendations from the 52nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

It has not been long since we met in Kampala in June last year for the Eighth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting. Allow me to congratulate Honourable Syda Bbumba, Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, who presided over the meeting, for an excellent job. Thanks to her, the meeting produced important outcomes that will guide the deliberations today. The theme of 8WAMM was 'Financing Gender Equality for Development and Democracy'.

The 52nd session of the CSW has as its theme 'Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women'. Thus, the two meetings' themes are similar. This is not by accident but rather by design. For decades now focus has been put on achieving gender equality and empowering women. From Mexico to Beijing women's demand for elimination of discrimination, equal political, economic and social opportunities and respect for their human rights gained momentum and led to the adoption of global policy and legal frameworks. At the national and regional levels similar developments were unfolding.

Yet the translation of these policy commitments into concrete action is lagging behind. In fact the situation for many women is worsening. According to the *Millennium Development Goals Report 2007*, the benefits of economic growth in the developing world have been unequally shared: 'often, those living in rural areas, children of mothers with no formal education and the poorest households – are not making enough progress to meet the targets (MDGs) even where the rest of the population is'.

However, although at the 2005 World Summit world leaders acknowledged that progress for women was progress for all, this profound statement has not been supported by a similarly profound political commitment. Despite a growing body of evidence demonstrating that gender equality makes also good economic sense and the calls for mainstreaming a gender perspective in all economic and public finance processes, adequate resources have not been systematically allocated.

Recent global reviews have concluded that inadequate funding is one of the serious causes of the gap between policy commitments and implementation. In order to make progress, resources must be provided. This point was underlined in the *Millennium Development Goals Report 2007*. The report indicates that several developing countries were demonstrating that rapid and large-scale progress towards the MDGs was possible when "strong government leadership and policies and strategies that effectively target the needs of the poor are combined with adequate financial and technical support...".

The Beijing Platform for Action emphasised that funding had to be identified and mobilised from all sources and across all sectors.

Thus it is clear that the decision to focus on funding gender equality work both at 8WAMM and at the 52nd CSW must have been driven by the gap between policy and implementation.

I will now briefly focus on the following seven points that flow from the outcomes of both meetings.

- **Sustained development** is acknowledged by both meetings as essential and integral to the achievement of gender equality. In this regard it will be recalled that the theme of the first world women's conference was equality, development and peace, which became the theme for the decade. Even then it was understood that without development for all, equality between men and women would be elusive. This remains true today.
- **Investment in women and gender equality** must be a priority because it has a multiplier effect on productivity, efficiency and sustained economic growth. In turn this contributes to the achievement of democracy, peace, security and development.
- **Strong National Women's Machineries** are needed to achieve gender equality and underpin other economic and social development goals.
- **Tracking of financial resources** both at the national level and within the United Nations system must be given priority attention. Evaluation and audit reports need to include resource allocation.
- **Strong partnerships** among member States, with inter-governmental bodies, the entities of the UN system, financing institutions, civil society and the private sector are required to galvanise resources for gender equality work.
- **Incorporation of a gender perspective** in the new aid modalities will enable provision of resources for gender mainstreaming work.
- **Mainstreaming gender** in all gender equality policies, strategies and plans and incorporating it into overall national development strategies and sector plans and budgets remains an essential tool for achieving gender equality.

These are some of the recurring messages in the discourse on financing of gender equality work.

Timing

8WAMM preceded the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), which also took place in Kampala. This provided an opportunity for 8WAMM to make an input in the CHOGM deliberations and sensitise Heads of Government to the urgent and critical need to finance gender equality work. This process is continuing. All the Commonwealth member States are either Members or Observers in the Commission on the Status of Women, where the issue of financing gender equality work is the theme of its 52nd session.

This year offers a number of entry points to systematically stress the linkages between development, the achievement of gender equality and the availability of predictable and sustainable resources.

First, the Commission will address the serious gap between the achievements at the global policy level and implementation at the national level. The Commission's deliberations are expected to lead to new policy outcomes on the gender implications of financing for development that would be incorporated in the documentation for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Doha in November 2008.

Second, in April UNCTAD XII will be convened in Accra, Ghana. This is yet another opportunity to raise the question of incorporating a gender perspective in trade and ensuring adequate resources to gender equality work in this sector.

Third, in September the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness will take place again in Accra.

The issues of how resources are allocated to gender equality work and the need for tracking, evaluating and reporting will need to be raised. This forum, which brings together donors and recipient partners, offers a great opportunity to communicate the concerns over inadequate funding of gender equality work.

Fourth, the Secretary-General will hold a high-level event on the MDGs in September in New York. It is expected that the event will bring together a number of partners including member States, civil society, the private sector, financial institutions and the UN system entities. We should insist that we move from the rhetoric that gender equality is necessary to achieve all development goals to the political will to allocate the required resources for development including the MDGs and in particular the targets under MDG 3 on gender equality.

Finally, governments must ensure that gender perspectives are fully incorporated in the preparations for and outcome of the Monterrey follow-up conference in Qatar. National machineries can play an important role to mainstream a gender perspective in these discussions in cooperation with other ministries, in particular the finance and planning ones. Without predictable and sustained resources, the existing gaps between policy commitments and implementation will persist, if not widen.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

There is a lot of work that is cut out for us. As you discuss these issues, both in this consultation and in the Commission, please bear in mind that this kind of opportunity rarely presents itself when a series of meetings will be focused on our priority topic. I urge you to seize the moment to ensure a good outcome.

I wish you a fruitful and successful consultation. I thank you for your attention.

Annex B-III: Statement by Hon Syda N M Bbumba, Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Government of the Republic of Uganda

Honourable Ministers, Deputy Secretary-General, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to address this important consultative meeting for National Women's Machineries. First and foremost, I would like to register my immense appreciation to my colleagues the Ministers for their support, contributions and participation in the Eighth Meeting of Women's Affairs Ministers (8WAMM). I particularly wish to thank you all for facilitating my role as Chairperson during the meeting. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the staff of the Commonwealth Secretariat for their guidance during the organisation and successful hosting of both 8WAMM and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), which were held in Kampala, Uganda, in 2007.

Uganda's hosting of 8WAMM was beneficial in several ways. For instance:

- Strategic alliances were strengthened among women's organisations,
- The publicity that was intensified during preparations of 8WAMM increased the visibility of the national machinery and gender issues in Uganda, and
- As a country we were able to evaluate our commitments towards the Commonwealth Plan of Action.

I am happy to note that this year's theme for the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) bears a close relationship with that of 8WAMM, which was 'Financing Gender Equality for Democracy and Development'. In this vein, the CSW provides a strategic opportunity for the Commonwealth to demonstrate strong leadership on key themes that are central to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

As we stated in the Kampala Communiqué and Kampala Statement to CHOGM, our priorities of focus for attainment of the gender equality goal remain the following:

- Tracking the money for gender equality,
- Financing National Women's Machineries for effective gender mainstreaming,
- Financing HIV/AIDs interventions,
- Promoting peace and democracy,
- Increased attention to reducing maternal mortality, promotion of girl's education and eliminating violence against women and girls, and
- Strengthening partnerships for gender equality, in particular partnerships with men and civil society organisations

My appeal to you, the Ministers responsible for gender equality and women's empowerment, is to continue to advocate and enlist support for increased financial and human resources to address the priority gender issues as identified at 8WAMM.

At the same meeting, we adopted a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to guide assessment of our progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action (PoA). The task before us as member States is to ensure operationalisation of this Framework. This will entail working closely with the Secretariat to make it a reality.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Government of Uganda has embarked on follow up of the recommendations of 8WAMM. A process

to review the National Development Framework is under way and the national machinery is working closely with partner agencies and civil society organisations to mainstream gender in this Framework, which when finalised will guide resource allocation in the country.

Government has also introduced the Prosperity for All programme (locally referred to as *Bonna Bagagawale*), a financial scheme to ensure that the poor, especially women, access affordable financial services. Under this programme, Government Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs) are being established in every sub-county where they do not exist and the existing ones are being linked to pre-qualified commercial banks. The SACCOs are the main mechanism through which financial services are channelled to the remote rural areas at reasonable interest rates of about 9 per cent for agriculture and 13 per cent for commercial activities.

On HIV and AIDS, the Government has continued to implement various programmes such as voluntary counselling and testing, treatment and care including provision of free antiretroviral therapy to infected persons.

On violence against women, the Government of Uganda has put in place various gender-based violence (GBV) programmes to counter the problem. It is, however, important to note that GBV spreads across the country and yet due to resource (financial) constraints, programmes coverage is only about 10 per cent.

As I conclude my remarks, I wish to reaffirm our country's commitment to the Commonwealth and global gender agenda, and to pledge our resolve to systematically follow up the resolutions and commitments. We are further committed to playing our role as a country and as current Chair of 8WAMM. We shall continue to make every contribution that we can towards advancing our shared vision and common goals.

I thank you.
For God and my country.

Annex B-IV: Extract from the 2007 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting Final Communiqué

Gender

70. Heads of Government reaffirmed that gender equality and women's empowerment, including greater progress in their economic empowerment, are fundamental for the advancement of human rights and the achievement of MDGs, development, democracy and peace. They welcomed the priority given by Women's Affairs Ministers, at their 8th Meeting in Kampala in June 2007, to financing gender equality, and endorsed their call for implementation of international, regional and national commitments to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. Heads of Government also endorsed their call for the effective monitoring and tracking of resources for gender equality and women's empowerment through gender-responsive budgeting and other gender analysis tools, and through strengthening aid effectiveness to improve accountability and the impact on gender equality. They also supported the call made by Finance Ministers in Guyana in October 2007 to specifically incorporate a focus on gender equality in the aid effectiveness agenda during the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in September 2008.

71. Heads of Government stressed the need to allocate adequate resources to: strengthen national women's machineries, public sector and civil society organisations; increase access for women to markets, property rights, credit and productive resources; and to improve women's participation, leadership and representation in decision-making at all levels including in peace, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction processes. Heads of Government condemned the continuing high levels of violations of the rights of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations. In this context, they also called for the full and consistent implementation by all States of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. They welcomed the agreement at the 8th Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting to establish a Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security. In particular, Heads requested the Secretariat to continue assisting member countries to implement the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015.

Annex B-V: Extracts from the 2007 Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting Communiqué

7. [...] 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 [...].

20. Ministers also called for the 2008 High Level Review of the Paris Declaration to incorporate a specific focus on gender equality and women's empowerment in the aid effectiveness agenda.

Gender

31. Ministers recognised that financing priorities for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment are critical for the achievement of economic growth, development, peace and democracy. In this context, they noted the call of the Eighth Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting, in Kampala, in June 2007 for provision and allocation of adequate resources to implement agreed international, regional and national commitments on gender equality. They reaffirmed commitment to Gender Responsive Budgets (GRBs) and agreed to biennial reporting on GRBs to FMM, with the next report scheduled for CFMM 2009. They recognised the importance and need for institutionalisation of GRBs through incorporation in budget documents and development of reporting systems that would track the money that is being allocated for gender equality. They noted that this would also lead to enhanced aid effectiveness.

Annex B-VI: Statement by the Commonwealth Foundation

The Commonwealth Foundation is an intergovernmental organisation established by Heads of Governments in 1965 – specifically to support and strengthen civil society’s work in the achievement of Commonwealth priorities in democracy and development and to strengthen multi-cultural understanding.

The Foundation’s unique position as an interface between governments and civil society enables us to foster greater co-operation and engagement between governments and civil society and play a growing role in facilitating civil society input into Commonwealth and global processes and ensuring that their voices are heard.

To turn to the report on 8WAMM, the Commonwealth Foundation would like to share the following:

Civil Society and 8WAMM

- 1 Prior to 8WAMM, the Foundation and the Commonwealth Women’s Network played a key role in generating interest in the theme of gender equality and financing including through meetings at the World Social Forum 2007 and at the 51st Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).
- 2 From 8–10 June 2007, a Partners’ Forum was convened under the auspices of the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth Secretariat, where civil society deliberations on a number of sub-themes – including peace and security, education, health, trade and gender-responsive budgeting – culminated in a communiqué.
- 3 It was indeed extremely heartening that at the Ministerial Meeting, concerns of civil society were welcomed, in particular in paragraph 23 of the 8WAMM Communiqué, which emphasised that ‘the challenge of prioritising gender equality can only be addressed effectively through co-ordinated action and genuine partnership with civil society’.

At the Commonwealth People’s Forum and CHOGM in November last year

- 4 The Foundation and civil society took the message of 8WAMM to the Commonwealth People’s Forum (CPF) where experiences of the effectiveness of aid on gender equality work were shared from Canada, Malta, Africa and the Pacific.
- 5 In compliance with paragraphs 70 and 77 of the CHOGM Communiqué on gender and civil society respectively, I wish to share the following information on preparations by various actors towards the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Ghana in September 2008.

Civil Society at the 52nd CSW

In line with the theme for the 52nd CSW, there are several activities led by civil society towards the High Level Forum.

- 6 Many civil society organisations’ initiatives to date have been directed towards assessing how their work on the ground is being adversely affected by the current patterns of aid flows and to bring these findings into the global process.
- 7 The Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID) has also conducted a number of studies and consultations on how the new aid architecture is affecting gender equality work, with the purpose of influencing the review of the Paris Declaration to make it more gender sensitive.
- 8 National Women’s Machineries are working with UN agencies and civil society to garner support for advocacy and lobbying activities required to get the gender agenda front and centre at the roundtable meetings during the High Level Forum.
- 9 What remains to be done is to develop a clear and co-ordinated process involving the various actors, including Women’s Affairs Ministers, on how consensus built over matters of aid

effectiveness – whether relating to health, education, gender-responsive budgeting, etc. – will be tabled at the roundtable meetings, and in particular at the ministerial meeting. Additionally, it is requested that discussions on how civil society can constructively work with governments to monitor post-HLF agreements begin as soon as possible.

The Commonwealth Plan of Action and the M&E Framework

- 10 We recognise the need to raise greater awareness of the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender Equality and the M&E Framework in order for civil society organisations to work with National Women’s Machineries to implement these frameworks.
- 11 This meeting in New York presents a good opportunity to take forward consensus on partnerships and priorities as we look towards 9WAMM and major evaluation of the Plan of Action. Civil society’s expectation is that the Foundation and the Commonwealth Secretariat will develop a framework towards engaging civil society in a meaningful manner so as to enable the achievement of the vision and objectives of the Plan of Action.

Annex B-VII: Chair's Report of the 3rd Meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group

Background

The Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG) had its 3rd meeting on 23 February 2008.

There were four important agenda items:

- 1 Briefing on Commonwealth Secretariat gender audit;
- 2 Update on the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework;
- 3 Update on the Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security;
- 4 Membership of CGPMG and election of chair.

The objectives of meeting were to:

- Consider the findings of the Commonwealth Secretariat gender audit;
- Finalise the recommendations for future steps for the M&E of the Plan of Action;
- Provide an update on the Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security;
- Inform about the new membership of the CGPMG and elect a chair.

1 Briefing on the Commonwealth Secretariat Gender Audit

1.1 The objectives of the audit were to assess gender mainstreaming in the Secretariat and the external impact of the Secretariat's programmes on gender equality for the period 1995–2005.

1.2 A number of the findings pointed to positive external results of the Gender Section's work, particularly through its publications; and high-level commitment from CHOGM and other meetings towards the PoA. However, internally, problems included dilution of mainstreaming, lack of systematic cross-divisional collaboration and gender mainstreaming being treated perfunctorily in project design and implementation.

1.3 Following the findings of the audit, the Secretariat has resolved to effectively mainstream through:

- Developing a clear gender policy;
- Reconstituting a high level Steering Committee to monitor mainstreaming in the Secretariat;
- Providing gender training for all staff;
- Improving communication with NWMs.

1.4 There was a general consensus that the findings of the audit mirrored the problems faced by NWMs.

1.5 Suggestions from the meeting included:

- (a) Establishing the post of 'Special Adviser on Gender' to champion mainstreaming;
- (b) Strategic thinking on the location of the Gender Section;
- (c) Striking a balance between efforts to ensure that gender is mainstreamed internally and supporting NWMs
- (d) Strengthening collaboration with civil society and the Commonwealth Foundation.

2 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

2.1 The Secretariat presented the salient points from responses received to a questionnaire sent to NWMs on three key issues:

- Challenges to implementing the M&E Framework;
- Three suggested priority actions to overcome challenges;
- Suggestion for harmonising reports.

2.2 Issues discussed included:

- The type of indicators and process for reporting in the absence of data;
- Harmonisation with other reporting instruments;
- Implementing the M&E Framework
- Steps to actualise the M&E process

2.3 The meeting made a number of recommendations as follows:

- Increased awareness of the PoA among other ministries;
- Matrix of all required reports to be developed to simplify reporting processes;
- Format for PoA monitoring to be simple and straightforward;
- Regional shadow reports to be produced;
- Capacity building to assist NWMs in formulating and writing reports;
- Development of qualitative indicators and data to reflect the impact of women's leadership roles on gender equality in the wider society;
- Assessment of whether countries have a gender policy and a national plan for gender equality;
- Sharing models of good practice from national and regional levels.

3 Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security

3.1 A request for nominations had been sent out to all NWMs in December 2007 with a deadline of 21 January 2008. There were 16 responses with the majority of the nominations being representatives of NWMs.

3.2 This Working Group is to be constituted of 14 members with experience and expertise in the area of gender, peace and security, based on nominations of Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs and the Commonwealth Secretariat. Members may be drawn from Ministries Responsible for Women's Affairs and Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Internal Affairs, Justice, Defence, Security or Reconstruction, Reintegration and Rehabilitation, civil society organisations including eminent persons and regional stakeholders with expertise in the area. Given the limited sectoral response, it was recommended that the period for nominations be extended to 31 March in order for further nominees to be submitted by member countries.

3.3 The meeting urged the Ministers to reconsider their nominations based on the issue and rationale for balanced representation to ensure effectiveness.

3.4 The meeting recommended that the Working Group should provide a progress report to the NWMs meeting in 2009.

3.5 The meeting urged the Secretariat to consider allocation of adequate resources for the Working Group as the Secretariat is currently drawing up its Strategic Plan.

4 Membership and Election of Chair

4.1 Since the alphabetical rotation of membership does not adequately reflect sub-regional specificities, the method of determining membership rotation will be revisited next year.

4.2 Both Bangladesh and Botswana were nominated for the position of Chair. After lengthy discussions, consensus was reached that Botswana would serve from 2008–2009 and Bangladesh from 2009–2010.

Annex B-VIII: Delegation Directory

ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

Dr Hon Jacqui Quinn Leandro
Minister of Labour, Public Administration and
Empowerment

Ms Sheila ROSEAU
Executive Director, Directorate of Gender Affairs

Ms Lebrechtta Nana Oye HESSE
Programme Officer

AUSTRALIA

Ms Julia BURNS
Executive Director, Office of Women

Ms Sun-Hee LEE
Director, Gender Unit, Australian Agency for
International Development (AusAID)

THE BAHAMAS

Ms Phedra RAHMING
First Assistant Secretary and Officer-in-Charge,
Bureau of Women's Affairs

BANGLADESH

Ms Rokeya SULTANA
Secretary, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs

Mr Tareq ISLAM
Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to
the United Nations

BARBADOS

Dr Hon Esther BYER-SUCKOO
Minister of Family, Youth, Sports and
Environment

Mr John HOLLINGSWORTH
Director of Gender Affairs

BOTSWANA

Ms Marty LEGWAILA
Director, Women's Affairs Department

Ms Victoria MASENYA

BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

Datin Hajah Adina OTHMAN
Director, Community Development Department

Ms Noryani HAJI ABDUL RANI
Community Development Officer

CAMEROON

Mr Jean-Baptiste KOAH
Director, Ministry of Women Affairs and Family
Welfare

Ms Cecile Mballa EYENGA
First Secretary, Permanent Mission of the Republic
of Cameroon to the United Nations

CANADA

Ms Clare BECKTON
Coordinator, Status of Women

Ms Suzanne COOPER
Executive Secretary, Commonwealth Women
Parliamentarians – Canadian Region

THE GAMBIA

Ms Ida Fye HYDARA
Director, Women's Bureau

Ms Fatou Jasey KUYATEH
Permanent Secretary, Office of the Vice President

GHANA

Ms Francesca POBEE-HAYFORD
Director, Department of Women, Ministry of
Women and Children's Affairs

Ms Dorothy ONNY
Assistant Director, Department of Women,
Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs

INDIA

Mr B N REDDY
Counsellor, Permanent Mission of India to the
United Nations

JAMAICA

Ms Faith WEBSTER
Executive Director, Bureau of Women's Affairs

Professor Barbara BAILEY
Regional Coordinator, Centre for Gender and
Development Studies, University of the West
Indies

KENYA

Professor Collette A SUDA
Secretary for Gender and Social Services

Ms Regina G M KAREGA
Chairperson, National Commission on Gender and
Development

KIRIBATI

Hon Amberoti NIKORA
Minister of Internal and Social Affairs

Ms Aren U TEANNAKI
Senior Women's Development Officer

MALAYSIA

Ms Margaret Ho Poh YEOK
Secretary General, Ministry of Women, Family
and Community Development

Ms Wan Nur Ibtisam WAN ISMAIL
Principle Assistant Secretary

MALDIVES

Ms Iruthisham ADAM
Permanent Mission of the Maldives to the United
Nations

MAURITIUS

Hon Indranee SEEBUN
Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development,
Family Welfare and Consumer Protection

Ms Marie-Lise How Fok CHEUNG
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Women's Rights,
Child Development, Family Welfare and
Consumer Protection

NAMIBIA

Hon Angelika MUHARUKUA
Deputy Minister, Ministry of Gender Equality and
Child Welfare

Ms Sirkka AUSIKU
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Gender Equality
and Child Welfare

Mr Victor SHIPOH
Director, Ministry of Gender Equality and Child
Welfare

NEW ZEALAND

Ms Sonya RIMENE
Senior Policy Analyst, Ministry of Women's
Affairs

Ms Sarah METWELL
Senior Policy Analyst, Ministry of Women's
Affairs

SAMOA

Ms Rona MELEISEA
Permanent Mission of Samoa to the United
Nations

ST KITTS & NEVIS

H E Ms Rosalyn E HAZELLE
Ambassador Plenipotentiary

Ms Ingrid CHARLES-GUMBS
Director of Gender Affairs

ST LUCIA

Ms Michelle JOSEPH
Minister Counsellor

Ms Rose Anne EVELYN
First Secretary, Permanent Mission of St Lucia to
the United Nations

ST VINCENT & THE GRENADINES

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