



4th Meeting of the Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group

Millennium UN Plaza Hotel, One United Nations Plaza, 44th Street,
between 1st & 2nd Avenue, New York, NY 10017
Saturday 28 February 2009

Note for Consideration by the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG)

1. BACKGROUND

The CGPMG was established in 2005 to function as a mechanism for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005 – 2015 (PoA). The attached Terms of Reference for the Group were agreed in 2005. They contain within them four key responsibilities for the Group to take forward:

1. To provide advice to the Commonwealth Secretariat on the development of PoA indicators;
2. To identify the most appropriate monitoring and evaluation framework for the PoA;
3. To provide advice to the Commonwealth Secretariat on the mid-term review of the PoA in 2010; and
4. To consider any issue that may be referred to it by Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs, related to the implementation of the PoA and, work with the Secretariat, as necessary to develop ToRs, including membership, for the Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security.

The CGPMG meets annually in conjunction with the Annual Consultation of NWMs held in the wings of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) in New York. Its work and successes so far include:

- Facilitating the development of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the PoA, adopted at the 2007 Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting. The M&E Framework sets out indicators which would enable countries to systematically track progress in gender equality and it will be the main tool for undertaking the 2010 mid-term review of the PoA.
- Developing the ToRs of the Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security
- Defining some modalities for the functioning of the group. This has involved developing guidelines on membership rotation of the group.

The CGPMG is made up of a rotating core of 20 national women's machineries and civil society organizations. The current membership is:

Africa/Europe: Botswana, Cameroon, Cyprus, Ghana

Asia: Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalem, Maldives, Singapore

Caribbean/Canada: Antigua & Barbuda; The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize

Pacific: Papua New Guinea; Samoa; Solomon Islands; Tonga

Civil Society (from the 4 regions):

- Women in Law and Development (WILDAF), Ghana/ National Council of Women Malta and Forum of Civil Society Organisations (FCSO Malta)
- Impulse NGO Network, India
- Women's Institute for Alternative Development, Trinidad and Tobago
- Pacific Foundation for the Advancement of Women (PACFAW), Fiji

The first Chair of the CGPMG (2006 – 2008) was Ambassador Rosalyn Hazelle of St Kitts and Nevis. The 2008 meeting of the CGPMG nominated Botswana to chair the group from 2008 - 2009 and Bangladesh from 2009 – 2010.

2. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

In order to strengthen the operations of CGPMG, the New York meeting will address the following issues:

2.1 Role and Responsibilities of the CGPMG

While the CGPMG TORs set out broad guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of the Group, the TORs are not specific about the roles of the Chair and the members in delivering those responsibilities, particularly between the New York meetings.

In reviewing the TORs of the CGPMG, and assessing the function of the Group, the following issues require consideration:

- Identification of specific issues to be addressed during the current term (within the context of the outlined responsibilities)
- Identification of expected outputs/outcomes

It has been suggested that a work programme may help to clarify the role of the Group and provide a structure to achieve the expected outputs/outcomes. It is hoped that the accompanying document on 'Roles and Responsibilities' will facilitate discussions towards this end.

2.2 Operationalisation

The current TORs of the CGPMG stipulate that the CGPMG is a virtual group, but will meet in conjunction with meetings of Commonwealth Heads of NWMs in the wings of CSW in New York, as required. Coordination of the CGPMG will be by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The CGPMG has yet to consider functioning as a virtual group in the intervening months between the New York meetings. The functioning of such a group may offer the opportunity for the Chair and the members to build on discussions held at meetings in New York. The Commonwealth Secretariat could play a facilitating role. Suggested modalities could include:

- Creation of a member e-group
- Bi-monthly conference calls
- Quarterly e-updates by the Chair (facilitated by the Gender Section) to the group
- Meetings of the CGPMG prior to New York as and when required (facilitated by the Gender Section, funds allowing).

2.3 Membership Rotation

According to the CGPMG rotation guidelines, selection of new members to the Group is done alphabetically. However, due to concerns raised by member countries regarding the alphabetical rotation, the 3rd meeting of the CGPMG in 2008 suggested that the Secretariat re-visits the method for determining membership rotation.

The Gender Section conducted a projection until 2015 and found the following picture emerging:

- In regions with fewer countries e.g. Asia, the same countries rotated-in after every year;
- While in the large Africa/Europe group, some countries would never have an opportunity to be on the Group in the life of the current PoA;
- At some points in the life of the current PoA there would be a complete absence of developed country members in the Group.

Taking the above into consideration, the Gender Section had produced a revised rotation guideline for consideration by the CGPMG.

2.4 Nomination of the Chair

It has been noted that guidelines/criteria to assist countries to nominate the Chair are needed; the TORs for the CGPMG make no mention of how the Chair should be elected/selected, only mentioning that the term of the Chair would be for one year and a maximum of 2 terms would be possible with the approval of Group members.

The CGPMG is to discuss the issue and agree on way forward.

Annex 1

Terms of Reference for the Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group

This Terms of Reference for the Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group was developed through the following process:

- A Draft Terms of Reference for a Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group was tabled by the Commonwealth Secretariat at the Commonwealth Beijing+10 Meeting, which was referred by Ministers to a specially convened meeting of the Gender Reference Group held in New York on 1 March 2005;
- A Revised Draft Terms of Reference for a Commonwealth PoA Monitoring Group, prepared by the Gender Reference Group on 1 March, was circulated to all Ministers for feedback by 20 May 2005;
- This final Terms of Reference for the Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group includes feedback received from Ministers.

Background

The Commonwealth 7WAMM Preparatory Meeting of Heads of National Women's Machineries (NWMs), held in New York on 1-2 March 2003 established a Commonwealth Gender Reference Group (CGRG) to work with the Secretariat to contribute to the development of the new Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015. The Group comprised two to three senior officials and one civil society representative from each of the five Commonwealth regions. The Terms of Reference for the original Commonwealth Gender Reference Group is included below. The Group was co-ordinated by the Commonwealth Secretariat as a virtual network, and has now discharged its full responsibilities.

The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 states in para. 4.22 (page 57) that "A Commonwealth Gender Reference Group, consisting of a rotating core of NWMs and representatives of CSOs from all the regions, will be established to assist with monitoring, evaluation and reviewing the PoA".

The Beijing+10 Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers, Senior Officials, Civil Society Organisations and Partners held in New York on 27 February 2005 agreed that the Revised Draft Terms of Reference for the new Commonwealth Gender Reference Group mandated by the PoA 2005-2015 (henceforth to be called the Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group (CGPMG)), should be developed by a specially convened meeting (1 March 2005) of the members of the original Commonwealth Gender Reference Group and be sent to member countries for feedback within 30 days.

Terms of Reference for the Commonwealth PoA Monitoring Group (CGPMG)

1. The responsibilities of the Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group are as follows:
 - (i) To provide advice to the Commonwealth Secretariat on the development of PoA indicators;
 - (ii) To identify the most appropriate monitoring and evaluation framework to: (a) meet the requirements of para. 4.19 of the PoA in harmonising the Secretariat's report on the PoA with CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for

- Action processes, the MDGs and targets, and UNSCR1325 in order to reduce the burden of reporting on NWMs and to avoid duplication; and (b) ensure effective implementation of the Plan of Action;
- (iii) To provide advice to the Commonwealth Secretariat on the mid-term review of the PoA in 2010 and updates as required, as well as the next steps beyond the current tenure of the PoA which ends in 2015; and
 - (iv) To consider any issue that may be referred to it by Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs, related to the implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 and, work with the Secretariat, as necessary to develop Terms of Reference, including membership, for the Commonwealth Working Group on UNSCR 1325.
2. The CPMG will be a virtual group, but will meet in conjunction with meetings of Commonwealth Heads of NWMs in the wings of CSW in New York, as required. The CGPMG will be co-ordinated by the Commonwealth Secretariat.
 3. The members of the CGPMG will initially comprise members of the original Commonwealth Gender Reference Group, as well as Australia:
 - **Africa:** The Gambia, Uganda, South Africa;
 - **Asia:** India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka;
 - **Caribbean/Canada:** Canada, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis;
 - **Europe:** Malta, United Kingdom;
 - **Pacific:** Australia, Fiji Islands, Kiribati, New Zealand;
 - **Civil Society:** Commonwealth Foundation and one civil society representative from each region (Africa, Asia, Caribbean/Canada, Europe and Pacific).
 4. Membership of the Commonwealth PoA Monitoring Group will be rotated biennially, with one member per region rotating out after the first year. The decision as to which member from each region would be rotated out after the first year will be taken at the first meeting of the CGPMG to be held in the wings of the 50th Session of the CSW in New York in February/March 2006. Volunteers for this rotation in advance of the meeting would be welcomed.

ToR OF ORIGINAL COMMONWEALTH GENDER REFERENCE GROUP

(This ToR of the original Commonwealth Gender Reference Group was published as Annex 1 in the *Report of the Commonwealth 7WAMM Preparatory Meeting of Heads of National Women's Machineries*, New York, 1-2 March 2003. London: Commonwealth Secretariat).

Background

The Commonwealth 7WAMM Preparatory Meeting of Heads of National Women's Machineries, held in New York from 1-2 March 2003, established a Commonwealth Gender Reference Group with representatives from all Commonwealth regions to prepare for the 7th Commonwealth Women's/Gender Affairs Ministers Meeting (7WAMM) being held in the Fiji Islands on 30 May – 2 June 2004.

The Commonwealth Gender Reference Group emerged from the need for co-ordination in planning 7WAMM and developing a new Commonwealth Plan of Action. Member governments and civil society partners must be at the centre of the Commonwealth's consultative process.

Such a strategic and cost-effective consultative mechanism will maximise the use of electronic communications technologies, including e-list-serves and websites.

The following countries were nominated by those present or their representatives:

- Africa: The Gambia (West), Uganda (East), South Africa (Southern);
- Asia: India (as host country of 6WAMM, to be confirmed), Malaysia, Sri Lanka (to be confirmed);
- Caribbean/Canada: Canada, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis;
- Europe: Malta (to be confirmed), United Kingdom (to be confirmed);
- Pacific: Fiji Islands, Kiribati, New Zealand (to be confirmed)
- Civil Society: Commonwealth Foundation and one civil society representative from each region (Africa, Asia, Caribbean/Canada, Europe, Pacific).

Terms of Reference for the Commonwealth Gender Reference Group

Each region will be represented by two/three countries' Heads of the National Women's Machineries. The regional representatives will make strategic recommendations to the Commonwealth Secretariat based on feedback from member governments and key partners in their respective regions. The Commonwealth Foundation will coordinate the regional civil society inputs into the consultative process. Regional agencies such as ECOWAS, CARICOM, NEPAD, Pacific Forum and SAARC will be consulted.

Members of the Commonwealth Gender Reference Group will be selected on a rotational basis at Women's/Gender Affairs Ministers Meetings.

The Commonwealth Gender Reference Group will be co-ordinated by the Commonwealth Secretariat. The Reference Group will play a consultative role in the following activities:

- Formulation of the 7WAMM agenda and format;
- Preparation of the Commonwealth Women's/Gender Ministers Reference Book, which will be drafted by Commonwealth Secretariat staff and a consultant based on questionnaire responses;
- Development of the new Commonwealth Plan of Action (2005-2015).

All exchanges will be by electronic means. It may be necessary for the members of the Commonwealth Gender Reference Group to meet in the wings of the 48th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in February/March 2004 in New York.

Immediate Follow-Up

NWMs of nominated countries not present at the New York meeting will need to confirm their representation of their respective regions. The Commonwealth Foundation will also advise regarding the civil society regional representatives and planned civil society-government consultations during May/June of 2003.