The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005 – 2015

THE COMMONWEALTH PLAN OF ACTION FOR GENDER EQUALITY 2005-2015

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Commonwealth Governments

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FOREWORD BY THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY-GENERAL

Gender equality is one of the fundamental principles of the Commonwealth. The new Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PoA) provides the framework within which the Commonwealth will contribute to advancing gender equality in the decade ahead. The PoA builds on past achievements, seeks to close persistent gaps, reflects the Commonwealth's response to global changes as they impact differently on women and men, and engages with new and emerging challenges. The PoA forms part of the Commonwealth's contribution to the United Nations Beijing+10 Global Review in 2005.

The new PoA will focus on four critical areas for Commonwealth action:

I. Gender, democracy, peace and conflict
II. Gender, human rights and law
III. Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment
IV. Gender and HIV/AIDS

The PoA recognises that socio-economic development, democracy and peace are inextricably linked to gender equality. Thus, gender equality is viewed not only as a goal in its own right but also as a key factor in enhancing democracy and peace, eradicating poverty and violence against women, ensuring education for all, improving maternal health, reducing child mortality and combating HIV/AIDS. Advancing gender equality across the Commonwealth will contribute to development, democracy and peace.

The PoA reinforces the Commonwealth's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the promotion of a rights-based approach to gender equality.

The PoA advocates that the achievement of gender equality should be undertaken in partnership with men and boys. The new PoA will also promote the involvement of young persons, since over half of Commonwealth citizens are under 30 years of age.

Partnerships have been recognised as being one of the most effective ways of working towards gender equality in the context of the Commonwealth's areas of comparative advantage and the principle of common values in diversity. The Commonwealth will strengthen existing partnerships and forge new ones, especially with organisations that have expertise in the four critical areas.

This Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 provides a template for action for the next decade. It will contribute to building a solid foundation for the achievement of gender equality in this century. And it reflects our commitment to ensure that, throughout the Commonwealth, women are recognised as equal partners with men in shaping our common future.

Don McKinnon
Commonwealth Secretary-General

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This document consists of four sections. **Section 1** introduces the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PoA), its background and its place in the Commonwealth's overall framework and agenda for development, democracy and human rights. **Section 2** outlines the achievements of the 1995 Plan of Action on Gender and Development and its 2000 Update[1], identifies lessons learned and challenges to be addressed in the next decade, and highlights the Commonwealth's areas of comparative advantage which underpin its work programme. **Section 3** analyses the four critical areas for Commonwealth action covered by the PoA, and makes recommendations for strategic actions by member governments and the Secretariat in relation to these areas. **Section 4** outlines how governments and the Secretariat will implement the recommendations in collaboration with partners and how accountability will be ensured through monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

2. The PoA reflects the Commonwealth's principles and values and incorporates its responses to the differential impacts of global changes and challenges on women and men, girls and boys. It supports and works towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the objectives of gender equality expressed in the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) and 2000 Beijing+5 Political Declaration and Outcome Document.

3. The Commonwealth recognises poverty eradication, the protection and promotion of human rights, the strengthening of democracy and gender equality as intrinsically inter-related. In fact, the MDGs cannot be fully attained while women and girls, and men and boys do not enjoy equal rights, treatment and access to resources in a climate of freedom from discrimination. The PoA thus takes a rights-based approach to all the critical areas it addresses, and is grounded in the framework of international and regional human rights conventions and other instruments.

4. The four critical areas on which the Commonwealth will focus its actions to advance gender equality are:

I. Gender, democracy, peace and conflict
II. Gender, human rights and law
III. Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment
IV. Gender and HIV/AIDS

5. Within these critical areas the Commonwealth aims to build on and deepen the gender mainstreaming approach introduced in the 1995 PoA and its 2000 Update, particularly when addressing persistent challenges such as gender-based violence and the achievement of women's full participation in leadership and decision-making.

6. Democracy is a fundamental value of the Commonwealth. Women's full participation in democracy and in peace processes, is crucial for the achievement of sustainable development. A target of no less than 30 per cent of women in decision-making in the political, public and private sectors by 2005 was recommended by the Fifth Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs (5WAMM) in 1996 and endorsed by the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Edinburgh in 1997. In 2000, the Sixth Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs (6WAMM) recommended that the Commonwealth take action, in collaboration with other international organisations and civil society, to include women at all levels of peace-building, peacekeeping, conflict prevention, mediation and resolution, and post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction activities.

7. While there have been some achievements, the challenge remains to: demonstrate the impact of women's contribution to democracy, peace and conflict in member countries; mainstream gender equality at all stages of the peace process; encourage political parties to adopt the 30 per cent target for women candidates; promote accountability for international legal instruments that governments have ratified; and harmonise national legislation with international standards as tools for promoting *de facto* equality. There is a need to develop a rights-based approach in multiple areas, including curriculum development and the promotion of a culture of peace, geared particularly towards young people.

8. International human rights instruments impose a duty on states parties to guarantee equality of rights between women and men. However, women's and girls' human rights continue to be widely violated, and they face different forms of discrimination and disadvantage at different stages in the life cycle. Because customary laws, practices and traditions can affect people more than statutory laws on a day-to-day basis, it is critical to promote active dialogue and engagement among members of the justice system, religious, cultural, traditional and civil institutions and communities, particularly to address harmful practices. Full consideration should be given to the human rights of women and girls, and men and boys and where violations occur, effective recourse and consequences need to be established. Access to life-long learning, as well as women's rights regarding access to and ownership of land and property must also be promoted and protected.

9. Gender-based violence remains widespread and has clear links with many other factors, such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, land and property rights, race/ethnicity, age and sexual orientation. An integrated response is essential to address it. The rapid growth of trafficking in persons is causing increasing global concern. Anti-trafficking legislation must embrace a human rights approach and protect the rights of those most vulnerable to abuse.

10. Women are by no means a homogeneous group: they feel the effects of gender inequalities in different ways. There are many groups of women with particular needs, for example women with disabilities, rural and urban women, and younger and older women, migrant, refugee and indigenous women, women of different races, ethnic groups, cultures and classes. When referring to 'women', this recognition of diversity is vital.

11. Special attention needs to be paid to the promotion and protection of the human rights of indigenous peoples, particularly women, who continue to be marginalised and disadvantaged in comparison to other groups in society.

12. Poverty is not only based on low or no income, but is also linked to limited or unequal access to opportunities such as political, economic, natural, social and cultural resources. Gender inequality causes and exacerbates the impact of poverty on women. In order to achieve poverty eradication, enhancing women's capabilities is of critical importance. Gender equality needs to be mainstreamed into programmes and processes related to poverty eradication such as the MDGs, PRSPs and SWAps. Women's health, including women's and girls' sexual and reproductive rights, nutrition and maternal mortality, are also priority issues, and impact on the ability of women to develop sustainable livelihoods.

13. While globalisation and trade liberalisation offer new opportunities for economic growth and poverty eradication, they also pose critical challenges related to loss of livelihoods and employment, particularly for women. Multilateral trade processes need to be engendered, with women participating fully in the negotiations towards fair and just trading agreements and systems.

14. In order to effectively address the feminisation of both labour and poverty, the Commonwealth will broaden its approach to gender and economic empowerment. This includes facilitating the creation of an enabling environment for women by establishing, in collaboration with the ILO, appropriate legal and regulatory standards to ensure women workers' rights, social protection, the identification and development of appropriate skills and promoting women's organisations and networking. Improved access to productive resources, markets, skills and extension services is also needed for women, especially in agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

15. The next phase of developing work on gender-responsive budgets will focus on the revenue side of budgets, and on processes to mainstream and monitor gender budget analysis to ensure that these efforts are institutionalised.

16. Poverty and gender inequalities are driving factors in the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS. Women and girls are more susceptible to contracting HIV not only for biological reasons but also because power imbalances can make it difficult for them to negotiate safe sex or refuse unwanted sex. Their unequal political and legal status perpetuates poverty, discrimination and limits opportunities in economic, social and cultural spheres of activity. Women's empowerment is a strategy for reducing their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, and alleviating the impact of the disease.

17. HIV/AIDS should be considered within the framework of sexual and reproductive health rights. This should be an integrated approach that recognises broader issues and goes beyond health interventions to reduce gender inequality.

18. The specific needs of HIV/AIDS' infected and affected women, including care-givers and those at risk of infection through gender-based violence and poverty, need to be addressed. Gender equality should be mainstreamed into multisectoral, national, regional and international policies and programmes on HIV/AIDS. The Commonwealth Youth Ambassadors for Positive Living Initiative and adolescent reproductive health programmes should also be supported and promoted as a means of preventing the spread of the disease among young people, particularly girls and young women.

19. Lack of availability of and access to female-controlled prevention methods are a critical factor in the increasing infection rate among women and girls. Greater attention needs to be paid to research and investment in microbicides, improving the female condom and exploring other forms of female-controlled HIV prevention.

20. The PoA recognises that men and boys are essential partners in achieving gender equality. There are emerging gaps affecting men and it is critical that the Commonwealth engage actively with institutions and partners that work with men on gender equality issues. The PoA also promotes the involvement of young persons in various programmes designed to achieve gender equality.

21. The Secretariat will provide increased support to governments in the implementation of the PoA, provide policy advice and

technical assistance on the application of gender mainstreaming, especially gender analysis and planning, and related issues identified by governments. For each critical area the PoA identifies strategies and mechanisms by which Commonwealth governments and the Secretariat will advance gender equality.

22. As well as strengthening the capacity of national women's machineries (NWMs) to mainstream gender equality, the Secretariat and other Commonwealth associations will work with other key constituencies including ministries, parliaments, local governments, justice systems, universities, public service training institutions and civil society organisations (CSOs), acting as advocate, broker and catalyst in the promotion of gender equality and mainstreaming.

23. The PoA is firmly grounded in partnership as the most effective way of working towards gender equality in the context of the Commonwealth's areas of comparative advantage and the principle of common values in diversity. The Commonwealth will strengthen existing partnerships and forge new ones, especially with organisations that have expertise in the four critical areas.

24. The Commonwealth recognises the four critical areas as inter-related and aims to integrate its implementation through various strategies such as generating and sharing knowledge and information, capacity building and monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

25. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting will be carried out in a variety of ways, including the Secretary-General's biennial report on the implementation of the PoA to CHOGM, and periodic meetings of Ministers Responsible for Women's/Gender Affairs. The Secretariat will integrate monitoring of the PoA into its 4-year strategic planning and 2-year operational planning cycles, and gender audits of the Secretariat's work will be undertaken to assess its impact in promoting equality between women and men in the Commonwealth.

Notes

1. Advancing the Commonwealth Agenda into the New Millennium (2000-2005): An Update to the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development. London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2000.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This new Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PoA) provides the framework within which the Commonwealth will advance its commitment to gender equality and equity.[2] The PoA incorporates the Commonwealth's response to the differential impacts of global changes on women and men, builds on achievements to date, seeks to close persistent gaps and engages with new and emerging challenges. The PoA will guide Commonwealth action for the 2005-2015 decade with a mid-term review in 2010 and updates as necessary. It will form part of the Commonwealth's contribution to the Beijing+10 Global Review in 2005.

1.2 Gender equality is one of the fundamental principles of the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) Harare Declaration of 1991. The framework on gender equality has been provided by Commonwealth PoAs on Women and Development (1987) and Gender and Development (1995). The 1995 PoA, which formed part of the Commonwealth's contribution to the Beijing Conference and Platform for Action (BPfA), made the paradigm shift from a focus on women to a gender mainstreaming[3] approach. It was updated in 2000 to reflect emerging gender equality issues in the new millennium. The Update provided a framework for strategic interventions grouped under two priority policy areas:

- Human rights, peace and political participation; and
- Macroeconomics and social development.

1.3 This PoA responds to the Commonwealth Secretariat's Mission Statement:

We work as a trusted partner for all Commonwealth people as a force for peace, democracy, equality and good governance; a catalyst for global consensus-building; and a source of assistance for sustainable development and poverty eradication.

The PoA reflects the Commonwealth's fundamental values: democracy and good governance; respect for human rights and the rule of law; equality between women and men, girls and boys; and sustainable development and the eradication of poverty. The PoA will build on the Commonwealth's areas of comparative advantage (see 2.10).

1.4 It is guided by the priorities set out in the CHOGM 2002 Coolum Declaration, and takes account of the CHOGM 2003 Aso Rock Declaration's vision of a Commonwealth committed to development and democracy as mutually reinforcing goals (see 3.6). It seeks to advance gender equality through Commonwealth governments and the network of Commonwealth institutions (see Appendix V). Gender equality is being mainstreamed in the Secretariat's new governance structure and its 2004-2008 Strategic Plan[4]. The PoA responds to the provisions on gender balance and equity in the Commonwealth principles on accountability and the relationship between the three branches of government (2003).

1.5 The PoA reinforces the Commonwealth's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), acknowledging that all these goals can influence the eradication of poverty, empowerment of women and improvement of women's and girls' access to health and education as well as to the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the BPFA (1995) and the Beijing+5 Political Declaration and Outcome Document (2000).

1.6 The PoA is committed to the promotion of a rights-based approach to gender equality by implementing the provisions of international, regional and national human rights instruments and mechanisms.

1.7 Issues of socio-economic development, democracy and peace are inextricably linked to gender equality. Thus, the PoA views gender equality not only as a goal in its own right but also as a key factor in enhancing democracy and peace, eradicating poverty, hunger and violence against women, ensuring education for all, improving maternal health, reducing child mortality and combating HIV/AIDS. Advancing gender equality across the Commonwealth will contribute to development, democracy and peace.

1.8 The PoA advocates that the achievement of gender equality should be undertaken in partnership with men and boys. However, in identifying a role for men and boys in the achievement of equality for women, a principle that must be observed is the recognition of men's existing role in perpetuating inequalities and the need for men and boys to reshape their behaviour and transform their roles. Recognising that over half of Commonwealth citizens are young persons under 30 years of age and that by 2015 the proportion is likely to increase to 60-70 per cent in many member countries, it promotes the involvement of young persons in various programmes designed to achieve gender equality.

1.9 The Secretariat's strategy is based on working closely with national women's machineries (NWMs) and other relevant ministries and agencies in their efforts to promote gender equality. The PoA seeks to strengthen the financial and human resource capacity of NWMs to act as catalysts for gender mainstreaming in member countries. This building of capacity of NWMs and CSOs, should be accompanied wherever possible by practical measures to achieve this goal.

1.10 The PoA seeks to promote strong and dynamic partnerships in order to accelerate the achievement of gender equality through advocacy, brokering, consensus-building and sharing of knowledge, information and best practice. The partnership amongst stakeholders will be based on the principles of mutual respect, mutual benefit, participatory decision-making and collective responsibility, shared resources, accountability and transparency. Partners include Commonwealth member governments, the network of Commonwealth institutions, the United Nations and its agencies, international financial institutions, multilateral and bilateral agencies, regional bodies (see Appendix VI), regional initiatives such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), civil society organisations (CSOs) and the private sector.

Notes

2. **Gender equality** refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men, and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that individuals' rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both men and women are taken into consideration, recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development.
Gender equity goes further than equality of opportunity to look at outcomes. Treating women and men, or girls and boys, equally does not automatically ensure that they obtain equal outcomes and benefits, since there are many structural factors that may militate against this. Work towards gender equity therefore looks at structural power relations in society as well as material resources, and may include taking positive or affirmative action to ensure that policies and programmes benefit women/girls and men/boys equally.

3. **Gender mainstreaming** is defined in the UN ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions 1997/2 as "...the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality."

4. The Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2004/5-2007/8: Programme 14 on Gender Equality and Equity will pursue the objective of 'strengthening the capacity of governments and civil society to achieve gender equality and equity in political, legal, social and economic policy, planning and programme implementation.'

2. ASSESSING COMMONWEALTH PROGRESS

Achievements

2.1 Commonwealth governments have adopted gender mainstreaming as the most effective strategy for achieving gender equality. A review of achievements in promoting gender equality since 1995 indicates significant advances in areas related both to the development and use of mechanisms for mainstreaming gender equality by governments and the Secretariat, and to actions on policy priorities identified in the 1995 PoA and its 2000 Update.

2.2 The following are some examples of the progress made by member countries:[5]

i. In response to the target set by the Fifth Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs (5WAMM), requiring that by 2005 at least 30 per cent of those in political and decision-making positions should be women, 12 Commonwealth countries had achieved women's representation in parliament of between 20 and 30 per cent by October 2003, with three (Mozambique, New Zealand and South Africa) consistently attaining the 30 per cent target. Since 1999, 24 countries have recorded an increase in female parliamentary representation, and there has been an appreciable rise in the number of female Ministers and Deputy Ministers.

ii. The Secretariat has done pioneering work on Gender-Responsive Budgets (GRBs), piloting its use in some countries, and developing tools and good practice. GRBs are being implemented in 50 countries internationally, 23 of which are Commonwealth countries. The GRB programme, spearheaded by the Secretariat in collaboration with other global partners, has promoted the use of the national budget as an instrument for ensuring that all sector programmes benefit women and girls, and men and boys equally.

iii. The Secretariat has developed the Gender Management

System (GMS) as the Commonwealth's sector-wide approach to gender mainstreaming in support of member countries. The GMS promotes gender equality as a guiding principle in mainstream policy-making, planning, programme implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. The GMS series of manuals provides a practical framework for applying gender analysis tools to priority sectors such as finance, education, trade and industry, and cross-cutting development issues such as poverty and the MDGs, HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence, and post-conflict reconstruction (see Appendix VII).

iv. Several governments have made efforts to integrate a gender perspective into various aspects of conflict prevention and resolution, peace agreements, peace-building, peace-keeping and post-conflict reconstruction. The Secretariat has supported this by organising regional symposia in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

v. A number of Commonwealth countries have made legislative and procedural provisions to combat domestic and other forms of gender-based violence. Some 11 Caribbean countries have put in place laws on gender-based violence drawing on the Secretariat's model legislation, and 12 SADC and East African countries have developed national action plans. The Secretariat has supported these initiatives through regional judicial colloquia on the promotion of the human rights of women and the girl child, and workshops in Africa, Asia and the Pacific on the Secretariat's integrated approach to gender-based violence.

vi. At CHOGM 2003 Commonwealth governments reaffirmed their commitment to combating the spread and mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS. Ongoing activities include mainstreaming gender equality in the multisectoral response to HIV/AIDS, strengthening the youth perspective of national AIDS policies, and advocacy aimed at involving men in HIV/AIDS prevention. Work on gender and HIV/AIDS has been undertaken with several African governments (e.g., Botswana, Ghana, Kenya and Namibia), and regional initiatives have been carried out through SADC and ECOWAS.

Lessons learned

2.3 Despite these achievements, there is now a clear need to accelerate implementation by member countries of both key international conventions and treaties and national gender equality policies, plans and programmes, to extend the range of partnerships, to pursue measurable results-oriented activities, and to develop more stringent monitoring of such implementation based on agreed targets and appropriate gender indicators.

2.4 This PoA is guided by reflection on both the achievements and gaps of the 1995 PoA and its 2000 Update. There is a need to deepen the work already begun, and continue to work on areas of persistent concern with renewed focus. The current global context throws up new issues related to gender, democracy, peace, conflict and human security, the opportunities and challenges of globalisation, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Attention to gender and economic empowerment needs to be broadened beyond macroeconomic policy to address the meso- and micro-levels that affect women's livelihoods in the formal and informal economy.

2.5 In 1995 the Secretariat's primary constituency on gender issues was NWMs, but increased awareness of the importance of gender equality underscores the need not only to strengthen NWMs but also to mainstream gender equality in ministries such as finance, planning, health and education. Strategic partnerships with other Commonwealth associations representing key constituencies such as parliamentarians, the judiciary, the private sector,[6] the media and CSOs have also proven to be effective in advancing the achievement of gender equality.

2.6 Focused implementation needs to be underpinned by sex-disaggregated data, and in many Commonwealth countries this is lacking or uneven. Governments need to enhance disaggregated data collection (by sex, age, ethnicity and other relevant factors) in order to improve their information and analysis for planning and programme delivery.

Current and emerging challenges

2.7 Major social, economic and political changes, particularly in relation to conflict, globalisation, poverty and HIV/AIDS, have vital implications for gender equality. For example, conflicts in Commonwealth countries are increasing in number and are steadily worsening in their impact on the lives of civilians, with clear and disturbing gender aspects (e.g., rape with impunity used as a weapon of war, abduction of girls, child soldiers, and refugees and internally displaced persons). One-third of the estimated 1.2 billion people in the world living on less than US$1 a day are Commonwealth citizens,[7] as are 64 per cent of the 2.8 billion people who live on under US$2 a day. Over two-thirds of these are women. Of the 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS,[8] 60 per cent are Commonwealth citizens, and nine of the most affected countries are Commonwealth member states. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that women account for more than half of all newly infected adults and, worldwide, 15.7 million women are living with HIV.[9]

2.8 This PoA sharpens the focus on working towards gender equality in partnership with men and boys, and also recognises emerging male gender gaps and issues. These include boys' underachievement in education, the issues of child soldiers and men in armed conflicts, and the pivotal role of men in sexual and reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS and its prevention. In addition to being perpetrators of gender-based violence, men and boys also experience various forms of violence, including gender-based violence in armed and other forms of conflict. As traditionally male-dominated industries collapse or are reorganised in the global economy, men frequently face unemployment. The PoA recognises that there is a diversity of regional and national experience in this respect, which countries will need to address appropriately.

2.9 The PoA recognises that poverty eradication and socio-economic development cannot be achieved unless women have equal access to social and economic resources. Further, women's livelihoods are critical to their ability to be free from gender-based violence, to negotiate safe sex and to exercise political influence.

Building on the Commonwealth's areas of comparative advantage

2.10 The Commonwealth's areas of comparative advantage respond to its principles and values: democracy and good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law, gender equality, sustainable development and poverty eradication. They also include issues related to least developed countries (LDCs), small states and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Common values and similarities among member countries in political, administrative, legal, educational and other systems also represent a strength, facilitating consensus-building and the sharing of experiences, expertise and resources.

2.11 The Commonwealth recognises that gender differences do not exist in a vacuum but intersect with a number of other factors of diversity, such as class/caste, race/ethnicity, age, religion, disability and sexual orientation. Diversity is intrinsic to the Commonwealth, which derives strength from its member countries' mix of peoples, geographical environments and levels of economic development, and uses the principle of common values in diversity to seize opportunities to share experiences and resources and develop consultative and collaborative processes.

2.12 The establishment by the Secretariat of a new Division, the Social Transformation Programmes Division (STPD), through merging the Gender, Education and Health sections, provides an excellent opportunity for mainstreaming gender equality into two of the most critical sectors of development, education and health, and thus for meeting several of the MDGs.

Notes

5. For detailed accounts, please see the Secretary-General's biennial Reports to CHOGM on the Implementation of the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development and its 2000 Update. London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1997, 1999, 2001 and 2003.

6. These Commonwealth associations include the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Commonwealth Magistrates and Judges Association (CMJA), and the Commonwealth Business Women's Network (CBWN) (see Appendix V).

7. Commonwealth Secretariat, Making Democracy Work for Pro-Poor Development, Report by Commonwealth Group of Experts. London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2003.

8. UNAIDS data, 2003; see www.unaids.org

9. WHO, HIV-Infected Women and their Families: Psychosocial Support and Related Issues. A Literature Review. Geneva: WHO, 2003.

3. CRITICAL AREAS FOR COMMONWEALTH ACTION

3.1 The Commonwealth focuses on four critical areas in this PoA:

I. Gender, democracy, peace and conflict
II. Gender, human rights and law
III. Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment
IV. Gender and HIV/AIDS

I Gender, democracy, peace and conflict

3.2 As a Commonwealth fundamental value, democracy is well articulated in various documents, notably in the 1991 Harare Declaration. The Commonwealth promotes and supports democracy, characterised by representative government, equal participation, transparency, accountability and responsiveness to all its citizens, women, and men, young and old persons. The importance of transparency should be emphasised because of the negative impact of corruption on women.

3.3 The 5WAMM in Trinidad and Tobago (1996) recommended that 'member countries should be encouraged to achieve a target of no less than 30 per cent of women in decision-making in the political, public and private sectors by 2005'. This target was subsequently endorsed by CHOGM in Edinburgh in 1997. Countries with proportional representation systems (e.g., New Zealand and South Africa) have recorded a marked increase in women's representation in parliament, and have encouraged women to pursue and advance political careers. Similarly, decentralisation, with its devolution of power and resources, appears to be creating better access and opportunities for women's effective participation and representation in government. Currently the 30% target will not be achieved by the 2005 deadline. The Commonwealth acknowledges the need to work harder to achieve the minimum target of 30% representation by 2015.

3.4 Many Commonwealth countries have continued to strengthen

democratic systems of government, introduced accountability measures, and increased women's representation through adoption and implementation of quotas and affirmative action measures. For example, Uganda introduced a constitutional reform to provide for one woman Member of Parliament per district and one third of local council positions for women. Similarly, India's 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments reserved one-third of all local government seats for women, which has resulted in over 500,000 women being elected to the Panchayat Raj throughout the country. Following the first post-conflict national elections in Sierra Leone in 2002, the percentage of women in parliament increased from 8 to 15 per cent.

3.5 However, many governments remain fragile and need stronger institutional infrastructure to sustain democracy, such as Ombudspersons, electoral commissions, parliamentary oversight bodies, an impartial judiciary to uphold the rule of law and human rights, and adequately trained civil servants, including women. Even where democratic institutions are firmly established, citizens, particularly women, continue to be marginalised and have little access or capacity to influence national policies, plans and programmes. This institutional infrastructure must be supported by explicit and practical capacity building to ensure that NWMs and CSOs can function effectively.

3.6 Women's participation and representation in the frontline of democracy and peace processes is crucial. For women to be able to influence decisions that affect their lives and those of their families, their political, social and economic empowerment must form part of the democratic ideal that contributes to sustainable development. In fact, since women constitute more than half the population, sustainable development cannot be achieved without them. Democracy and development thus need to be seen as mutually reinforcing goals essential to the achievement of gender equality.

3.7 The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on the Harare Declaration (CMAG) is a body set up to monitor and ensure adherence to fundamental values of democracy and good governance, respond to serious and persistent violations of these

in member countries and make appropriate recommendations. The Secretary-General's Good Offices, reaffirmed most recently by CHOGM in Abuja in 2003, supports capacity-building initiatives to prevent and resolve conflicts, and to ensure increased women's participation and representation in peace processes.

3.8 In the Commonwealth and globally, armed conflicts within and between states, sharpened by growing threats to human security and assisted by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, are on the increase. Unequal power relations, lack of access to resources, intolerance and lack of respect for individual rights and freedoms fuel armed and other forms of conflict. Statistics show that civilian populations are increasingly the targets of a myriad of human rights violations such as trafficking in persons, rape with impunity used as a weapon of war, abduction of girls, recruitment of child soldiers and other crimes against humanity. These actions and crimes, committed by both state and non-state actors, violate conventions and treaties such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the four Geneva Conventions, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), with their various Optional Protocols. The differential impacts of conflicts on women, men and children, and the challenges they create, have profound democratic and developmental implications for all humanity. Women and girls with disabilities in conflict situations are particularly vulnerable and specifically targeted for support.

3.9 The 1995 BPfA identified the effects of conflict on women as one of its 12 critical areas of concern. It affirmed the need to increase women's participation in conflict resolution and peace-building at decision-making levels. It also recommended strategic actions to be taken by governments, the international community, the private sector and CSOs, urging adequate protection of women and children during times of conflict. These recommendations arose principally from a view of women as 'victims' of armed conflict. However, women's active and positive contributions towards peace and conflict resolution processes have more recently also been recognised and documented by the international community. Consequently, the UN Security Council

in its resolution 1325 in 2000 made an urgent call for the 'equal participation and full involvement of women in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security', and emphasised 'the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution'.

3.10 Against this background, the 6WAMM in Delhi (2000) recommended that 'the Commonwealth take action in collaboration with other international organisations and civil society to include women at the highest levels of peace-building, peacekeeping, conflict mediation, resolution, and post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction activities'. They encouraged a 30 per cent target of women's participation in peace initiatives by the year 2005. As part of its assistance to countries experiencing conflict, the Secretariat held a Sierra Leone national consultation on 'Women and Men in Partnership for Post-Conflict Reconstruction' in May 2001, following a decade of armed conflict that led to the virtual collapse of the country's social, economic, legal and political fabric. The consultation provided a platform for Sierra Leoneans to share their experiences and views, and define their own solutions so that women, men, boys and girls could work together to create a more democratic, equitable and prosperous future.

3.11 The challenge now is to push beyond numbers and demonstrate the impact of women's contribution to democracy and peace in member countries; promote implementation and accountability for international legal instruments that governments have ratified; harmonise national legislation with international standards as tools for promoting de facto equality; encourage political parties to adopt the minimum 30 per cent target for women candidates; and ensure women's participation and representation in conflict prevention and resolution, peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction processes. In line with the Commonwealth's comparative advantage, there is need to develop a human rights-based approach to citizenship and peace education at all levels of society including curriculum development and the promotion of a culture of peace, geared particularly towards young people, to ensure sustainability.

3.12 Consequently, activities in this critical area will focus on:

i. Supporting the adoption, accession, ratification, implementation and monitoring of legal instruments and frameworks related to democracy, peace and conflict.
ii. Strengthening democratic and political systems through achievement of the Commonwealth target of at least 30 per cent of women in decision-making in the political, public and private sectors. This will require a strengthening of institutional capacity. Countries which have already reached 30 per cent should continue to strive for a higher target.
iii. Supporting the development and mainstreaming of gender equality into early warning mechanisms, conflict prevention and resolution, peace agreements, peace-building, reconciliation, post-conflict reconstruction, and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes.
iv. Promoting capacity building and strengthening partnerships between governments, NWMs, civil society, media, schools, institutions of higher education, religious organisations and other social institutions, regional and international bodies in the promotion of gender equality and tolerance of diversity.
v. Ensuring the collection and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data and integrating gender analysis into policy-making, planning and programme implementation in conflict and post-conflict situations.
vi. Documenting and disseminating best practice in gender equality initiatives in the area of democracy, peace and conflict.
vii. Promoting the funding of programmes that will facilitate the gender-sensitive leadership of young people.
viii. Promoting attention to democracy, good governance, peace, security and the importance of gender issues in the school curriculum.

3.13 Governments are encouraged to take action to:

i. Increase women's representation to a minimum of 30 per cent in decision-making in parliament and local government by creating an enabling environment for women (including young women) to seek and advance political careers and by other measures such as encouraging political parties to adopt

a 30 per cent target for women candidates as part of their manifestos and to provide leadership training for women. Governments who have already achieved 30 per cent should strive for much higher aspirations.

ii. Review the criteria and processes for appointment to decision-making bodies in the public and private sectors to encourage increased women's participation and representation. This will require explicit investment into institutional capacity.

iii. Promote standards in the media whereby discriminatory and/or derogatory images and remarks about women are eliminated.

iv Reduce and eventually eliminate the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

v. Promote women's full, equal and effective participation at all levels and stages of peace-building processes including formal and informal negotiations and agreements.

vi. Ratify legal instruments, and ensure that national legal frameworks promote and protect women's human rights, and provide redress for survivors of armed conflict, particularly women and girls.

vii. Mainstream gender equality, human rights, HIV/AIDS into the training of peacekeepers, disciplined forces, and law enforcement personnel and their partners to ensure appropriate codes of conduct.

viii. Promote and support the work of the Special Tribunals,[10] and ensure that where crimes are committed in situations of armed conflict, all perpetrators are prosecuted, both state and non-state actors.

ix. Address the specific needs of women, men and young persons in conflict situations, especially those of child soldiers, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and people with disabilities.

x. Provide adequate medical, financial and psycho-social assistance and care for women and men, including culturally sensitive counselling to survivors of rape, sexual assault and other violations.

xi. Implement effective disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for ex-combatants that address the specific needs and experiences of women and girls in post-conflict situations.

xii. Promote assistance in mine clearance, and support efforts to co-ordinate a common response programme of assistance in de-mining without unnecessary discrimination.[11]

xiii. Develop peace and citizenship education programmes (including in conflict situations) that promote respect for individual rights and freedoms, gender equality, diversity including religious and cultural diversity, and pluralism.

xiv. Collect, monitor and disseminate with urgency sex-disaggregated data to inform early warning mechanisms and conflict intervention programmes.

xv. Promote the implementation and monitoring of Security Council Resolution 1325.

3.14 The Secretariat will take action to:

i. Assist governments, NWMs, political parties, civil society and other partners to achieve the target of 30 per cent of women's representation in the political, public and private sectors.

ii. Support legislative reviews, policies and programmes including women-specific measures that guarantee equal opportunities and treatment to women and men in all sectors and at all levels.

iii. Support leadership and other capacity-building programmes to enable women (including young women) to seek political office and advance political careers.

iv. Provide policy advice and technical assistance to countries in mainstreaming gender equality at all stages of the peace process, including conflict prevention and resolution, peace agreements, peace-building, peacekeeping, reconciliation, post-conflict reconstruction, and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes. This will require the extension of work in partnerships for post-conflict reconstruction.

v. Support member countries' ratification and implementation of legal instruments that promote and protect human rights, including women's rights, and redress violations in conflict and post-conflict situations.

vi. Support the development of peace and citizenship education (including in conflict situations) as part of school curricula, to promote and foster a culture of peace.

vii. Collaborate with governments, NWMs and other partners to document and disseminate best practice in the area of gender, democracy, peace and conflict.
viii. Collaborate with governments, NWMs and other partners to undertake gender-focused research and analysis on women and girls in situations of armed conflict.

II Gender, human rights and law

3.15 The Commonwealth asserts its commitment to promoting a rights-based approach in all areas of its work. In issues related to gender equality and human rights, national constitutions, international human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and CEDAW are the primary instruments by which states parties have a duty to guarantee equality of rights between women and men. This framework is reinforced by provisions in national statutes, as well as regional treaties and instruments. In addition, other critical international or regional human rights instruments and monitoring bodies, which embed and extend these rights,[12] must also be recognised as key instruments for moving forward the gender-based rights agenda and integrating it into policies and programmes at all levels.

3.16 Although 50 Commonwealth countries have ratified CEDAW and 15 have ratified its Optional Protocol, there are still significant gaps in implementation. Many countries have ratified with reservations. Commonwealth countries should be encouraged to ratify CEDAW and other instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The lack of a gender perspective in the administration of the law has stymied gains made in international and regional treaties and conventions. Even where sound legislation exists, application and interpretation of these laws are inadequate for many reasons: lack of political will, jurisdictional issues, lack of awareness in the public service and justice systems at all levels, lack of enforcement capacity, traditional or customary systems of law that discriminate against women, women's inadequate awareness or legal illiteracy concerning their rights and recourse to justice, limited human and financial resources for monitoring and enforcement at national, local and community levels, and inadequate evidence-based data collection. It is in this context that violations of human rights of women and girls including elderly women and women with disabilities, occur and actions to redress these issues such as human rights education, remain urgent priorities.

3.17 Women and girls experience different forms of discrimination and disadvantage at different stages in the life cycle. Genetic selection may be used to reduce the proportion of girls being born; as children, they may be denied the right to an education. As girls mature, their sexuality and sexual identity may conflict with their society's legal, social or religious views about sex, marriage and childbearing. In the labour market, women's work is often accorded lower value, status and remuneration than men's; women and girls are more vulnerable to exploitation; and women experience particular discrimination as they age. In order to ensure that progress and gains made at one stage in the life cycle are not negated by adverse experiences and discrimination later, adequate support needs to be given to enable transitions throughout the life cycle.

3.18 Customary and religious laws, practices and traditions often have greater significance and value for people in their daily lives than the established statutory and constitutional laws in a country. In addressing gender equality and human rights issues, it is critical to recognise the complex ways in which identity, values and behaviour are formed and regulated at household and community level, often being shaped by elders, traditional leaders or religious institutions.

3.19 It is therefore critical to promote active dialogue and engagement among members of the justice system, religious, cultural, traditional and civil institutions and communities to address women's human rights in all cultures. It is critical that harmful practices which violate the rights of women and girls such as female genital mutilation (FGM), early marriage, widow inheritance[13] are eliminated as a matter of urgency. Where multiple legal systems and practices exist - including constitutional, religious and customary - full consideration should be given to the human rights of women and men, and girls and boys and where violations occur, effective recourse and consequences need to be established.

3.20 Gender-based violence remains one of the most intransigent forms of human rights violation because of its complex and varied forms and contributing factors. The right to freedom from gender-based violence will only be effectively realised in the context of increased social, political and economic freedoms and rights for women. There are clear links between gender-based violence and many other factors, such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, land and property rights, race/ethnicity, age and sexual orientation, and effective strategies to address gender-based violence need to recognise the full range of discrimination and prejudice in which it is perpetrated. Approaches to gender-based violence have often failed to recognise the special predicament of widows and older women who may be especially vulnerable due to their economic and social circumstances. There is evidence that widows of all ages are abused through traditional practices which include discrimination in inheritance and property ownership. This situation is immeasurably compounded by conflict which has not only increased the number of widows worldwide, but renders them and their children more vulnerable to violations of their rights. Integrated approaches undertaken by all relevant agencies are required, underpinned by comprehensive laws and policies, monitoring and enforcement systems, and mechanisms to ensure accountability for implementation.

3.21 The rapid growth of trafficking in persons is causing increasing global concern. Many of those most exploited and subjected to slavery-like situations are women and girls. It is widely acknowledged that the root causes of trafficking include the feminisation of poverty, displacement as a result of natural and human-made catastrophes, gendered cultural practices, gender discrimination and gender-based violence in families and communities. However, it is important to recognise clearly the distinctions between trafficking, smuggling and regular and irregular migration, and to ensure that solutions and strategies appropriate to each context are found. Anti-trafficking legislation must embrace a human rights approach and protect the rights of those most vulnerable to abuse.

3.22 In countries where indigenous peoples, particularly women, continue to be marginalised and disadvantaged in comparison to other groups in society, and face significantly greater poverty, social exclusion and discrimination, there has been a lack of recognition of their rights, despite acknowledgement of the marginalisation of indigenous peoples in the CHOGM Lusaka Declaration of 1979.

3.23 Respect for land and property rights is fundamental to the realisation of human rights and gender equality. Despite constitutional and legal guarantees in many Commonwealth countries prohibiting discrimination against women with regard to ownership of, access to, or inheritance of land and property, *de facto* discrimination persists.

3.24 Consequently, activities in this critical area will focus on:

i. Legislative and constitutional reform, judicial capacity building and strengthening of mechanisms for implementation, monitoring and accountability of gender equality commitments.
ii. Culture, violence against women, the law and human rights, including rights regarding access to and ownership of land and property.
iii. Gender-based violence, integrated with work on trafficking in persons (especially women and girls), conflict resolution, peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction.
iv. Indigenous peoples' rights, with a focus on indigenous women and girls.
v. Gender and human rights throughout the life cycle, addressing discrimination and opportunities at all stages of life and ensuring the maintenance of rights from one stage to another, linked with the achievement of the MDGs and poverty eradication strategies.

3.25 Governments are encouraged to take action to:

i. Recognise, ratify and implement international and regional human rights instruments that promote gender equality.
ii. Promote legal and, where appropriate, constitutional reform in accordance with the universal standards of human rights including CEDAW in support of gender equality and strengthen the knowledge and capacity of the justice system,

parliament and local authorities on gender equality and rights issues through appropriate and ongoing gender training.

iii. Promote active dialogue and engagement between members of the justice system and religious, cultural, traditional and civil institutions and communities, to address women's human rights at all levels.

iv. Adopt an integrated, zero-tolerance approach to gender-based violence, including strengthening of the law, appropriate public education, adequate institutional and financial support to address the needs of victims and witnesses, and rehabilitation of perpetrators.

v. Promote the implementation and enforcement of appropriate laws and policies against trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of women and children, including the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Women and Children, and develop plans and strategies to give effect to this protocol at the national level.

vi. Foster and develop national, local and regional programmes of action with indigenous peoples, particularly women, in accordance with international human rights standards and Commonwealth values on development, democracy and good governance, where required.

vii. Promote the maintenance of gender-related rights throughout the life cycle, through the fulfilment of commitments made in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW, as well as other agreements such as the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and related regional plans of action and implementation strategies.

viii. Ensure that women's rights to land, housing, property and inheritance are promoted and protected, having recourse to relevant international and national instruments on human rights and poverty eradication.

ix. Codify positive customary laws that protect women as a process of reviewing the existing laws to ensure that all laws are in conformity with both international and domestic human rights obligations.

3.26 The Secretariat will support member countries by:

i. Working with governments and in collaboration with CSOs to develop appropriate laws and policies for the promotion and protection of women's human rights.

ii. Documenting and disseminating case studies of good practice that address customary laws and practices that promote the rights of women and girls; examples of dialogue and synergy between customary systems and constitutional and statutory institutions; and good practices in land reform processes that take into account gender equality.

iii. Providing training on the elimination of gender-based violence, using integrated approaches, and promoting the sharing of good practice at all levels.

iv. Supporting governments in the development of national plans and strategies to implement the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Women and Children.

v. Promoting the rights of indigenous peoples, especially women, in political, social, economic and cultural spheres.

III Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment

3.27 As has been noted earlier (see 2.7), the Commonwealth contains a sizeable proportion of those living in poverty. It is now universally accepted that poverty is not only based on low or no income but is also intrinsically linked to lack of access to political, economic, social, natural and cultural resources. This results in the lack of entitlements and opportunities, and social exclusion that can be based on gender, class, caste or other forms of marginalisation. Gender inequality causes and exacerbates the impact of poverty on women, who globally account for about 70 per cent of those living in poverty. The BPfA and the Beijing+5 Outcome Document identified women's persistent and increasing burdens of poverty and unequal access to resources as critical areas of concern. It is clear that in order to achieve the MDGs, the policies addressing poverty that are adopted must necessarily promote gender equality. While no specific gender target has been attached to the first goal, indicators with economic implications relate to the expansion of women's waged employment in the non-agricultural sector (goal 2) and security of land tenure (goal 7).

3.28 While globalisation and trade liberalisation offer new opportunities for economic growth and poverty eradication, they also pose critical challenges related to loss of livelihoods and employment for both women and men, and increasing labour mobility that can have serious implications for families, with women generally being more severely affected. Economic restructuring and high levels of debt, conflict, HIV/AIDS and environmental degradation also constrain the ability of many countries to meet the challenges of poverty eradication. The maintenance of culturally appropriate social safety nets is important in the context of globalisation. Macroeconomic policies do not take into account the unpaid work that women contribute to the economy as part of the unequal recognition and valuation of the contribution of women and men to production and social reproduction. They also focus predominantly on the formal economy, whereas in most countries women constitute the majority of workers in the informal economy, estimated to represent 45-80 per cent of all non-agricultural employment worldwide. Legal and regulatory frameworks have insufficiently taken into account women's rights. Unequal access to power and decision-making, education and training, and economic resources, especially land and credit/financing, and the absence of social protection increase women's vulnerability. The impact of privatisation on women's access to services should be monitored.

3.29 In order to achieve poverty eradication, enhancing women's capabilities is of critical importance. Four out of five countries with the largest number of children not in school are Commonwealth countries, and there are at least eight countries where less than 40 per cent of girls are enrolled in schools. When girls are enrolled, their levels of retention, completion and achievement are often much lower than boys. In other contexts, girls demonstrate high achievement but it is not necessarily reflected by commensurate gains in the labour force. Gender disparities are also evident in increasing levels of underachievement and other difficulties among boys in many Commonwealth countries. Women's health, including women's and girl's sexual and reproductive rights and maternal mortality, are also priority issues and impact on the ability of women to develop sustainable livelihoods. Attention also needs to be paid to the maintenance of good health services and, in some Commonwealth countries, to reducing the migration of critical health personnel, including nurses, doctors and teachers.

3.30 Many Commonwealth developing countries cannot achieve economic growth because of their debt burden. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative seeks to provide debt relief and offers opportunities for some reallocation of scarce resources for priority social expenditures, particularly in health and education. The Secretariat is in the process of mainstreaming gender equality through the debt management advisory services that it provides to governments and through its Debt Recording and Management System (DRMS), which it has successfully introduced to over 50 countries.

3.31 The prevalent market-access focus of trade policies and liberalisation, and assumptions regarding the 'gender neutral' character of the processes of globalisation and trade liberalisation agreements, have often obscured their impacts on gender relations, poverty eradication and human development. Since women shoulder the primary responsibility for household and community management through their paid and unpaid work, their overall time burden and even their health are directly affected by trade policies. Policies regarding export and import affect women as producers and consumers in different ways than men. Further, trade often has different impacts on women and men due to the existence of occupational segregation. In addition, women in many countries are unaware of how to use intellectual property rights to protect their livelihoods, especially those working in cultural knowledge and handicraft industries. Increased cutbacks by governments, or the withdrawal of government provision of services or subsidies in certain sectors lead to reduced investment and expenditures in the social sectors, resulting in reduced access to basic services and social protection as well as food insecurity.

3.32 It is therefore important not only to enhance the negotiating capacity of Commonwealth countries, particularly developing countries so that they can play a key role in setting the agenda and can benefit from trade negotiations, but also to ensure that gender analysis becomes part of the process of developing trade

policies and negotiations. In view of gender-differentiated access to resources and the gendered division of labour, the differential impacts on women and men of measures undertaken must be taken into account. In this context, it is important not only that gender perspectives are mainstreamed into trade agreements but also that representatives of women's interests participate in the negotiations towards fair and just trading agreements and systems.

3.33 Gender-responsive budget (GRB) analysis is increasingly becoming a tool for managing critical governance issues and for assessing the impact of economic policies on women. The GRB initiative, developed by the Secretariat in collaboration with partners including IDRC, UNIFEM, UNDP and OECD, has been an invaluable instrument in encouraging governments to apply gender analysis to the expenditure side of their national budgetary process. Twenty-three Commonwealth countries[14] have put in place some form of gender budget analysis, and initiatives are emerging in many others. In addition to giving much greater attention to the revenue side of budgets, the next phase of GRB work will focus on processes to mainstream and monitor gender budget analysis in specific Commonwealth countries to ensure that these efforts are institutionalised.

3.34 In order to effectively address the processes of the feminisation of both labour and poverty, the Commonwealth will broaden its approach to gender and economic empowerment to encompass the macro-, meso- and micro-levels as a continuum. At the macroeconomic level, this means building on and institutionalising initiatives to mainstream gender equality perspectives across critical areas related to the formulation of fiscal and trade policies, and policies related to enterprise and agricultural development. At the meso-level, the main thrust of Commonwealth activity will relate to the creation of an enabling environment for women workers, both self-employed and wage-employed, in the agricultural and non-agricultural areas, and influencing poverty eradication strategies and programmes. At the micro-level there needs to be focused attention on increasing access to resources of all kinds for women: natural, material, financial and technological. These would result in enhanced well-being and economic empowerment and would be manifested in food security, sustainable livelihoods, social protection and more and better employment opportunities.

3.35 An enabling environment includes the establishment of appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks to ensure workers' rights and the adoption of appropriate social protection measures to mitigate the risks and vulnerability faced by women workers. Legal and regulatory frameworks also need to be established for the support and establishment of medium, small and micro-enterprises especially for the benefit of economically and socially disadvantaged women whose livelihoods depend on agriculture, forestry or fisheries and who need to be equipped with appropriate technical skills and backward and forward linkages. Other key factors to enable women to respond to the world economy as workers and entrepreneurs include increased access to social, economic and natural productive resources, including land and capital; appropriate skills development; and access to markets and to knowledge and information, including ICTs. Facilitating the organisation and networking of women can play a key role in their ability to make their voices heard at local, national, regional and international levels. Statistical and data collection systems need to enhance the visibility and valuation of women's paid and unpaid work and will require data to be sex-disaggregated.

3.36 Consequently, activities in this critical area will focus on:

i. Influencing fiscal, trade, and labour policies for the implementation of GRBs, the engendering of multilateral trade processes and the improvement of women workers' conditions and rights; and influencing sectoral policies in areas that would enhance women's livelihoods, such as agriculture, fisheries and forestry by improving women's access to productive resources, markets, skills and extension services.
ii. Facilitating the creation of an enabling environment for all women by establishing, in collaboration with the ILO, appropriate legal and regulatory standards to ensure women workers' rights, social protection, the identification and development of appropriate skills, and promoting women's organisations and networking.

iii. Mainstreaming gender equality into programmes and processes related to poverty eradication, the MDGs, PRSPs, SWAps, etc., and working to enhance women's access to and control over productive and natural resources.

3.37 Governments are encouraged to take action to:

i. Ensure that fiscal, trade and general macroeconomic policies are designed to promote women's economic empowerment and do not cause adverse gender impacts, ensuring that there is a stronger, but culturally appropriate social safety net for women and families.
ii. Promote the application and extension of GRB processes, and integration of gender analysis in trade policy and negotiation of trade agreements to ensure and protect social development, including the provision of essential public and social services, to undertake gender and social impact analyses and assessments of trade agreements.
iii. Develop and enforce policies and standards that recognise the contribution of women in the informal economy, and also ensure that their needs and interests are met in the policies of all relevant ministries.
iv. Promote policies and strategies to ensure the enrolment, retention and successful achievement of girls in education systems particularly at the primary and secondary levels, to review the school curricula to ensure that it does not promote gender stereotypes, and to improve the quality of education to meet or exceed the relevant MDGs and indicators.
v. Develop, amend and implement laws to ensure equal rights to productive resources (e.g. land, property and credit) for women and men, and enhance women's access to and control over natural resources (e.g. water and forests) in order to create sustainable livelihoods and food security.
vi. Develop equitable social protection systems to deal with risk and vulnerability caused by poverty, sickness, maternity, loss of employment or access to other income, disasters, etc.
vii. Involve women actively in the development of macroeconomic policies, programmes and implementation strategies (MDG strategies, trade agreements, national budgets); integrate gender analysis and gender equality provisions into all PRSPs and other poverty eradication strategies; and ensure 30 per cent representation of women in business, banking and financial boards. Set up consultative teams that include women and pro-poor CSOs to monitor the gender equality provisions these contain.
viii. Provide gender-sensitive agricultural (e.g., dairy, forestry and fisheries) services and credit, including micro-credit/finance to women farmers and entrepreneurs.
ix. Develop programmes to meet women's need for appropriate skills, including non-traditional skills and technology, and facilitate credit/financing and marketing linkages, particularly for marginalised and vulnerable categories of women, including rural women.
x. Support women's entrepreneurship, provide an enabling environment for business development, promote user-friendly training in trade negotiations at all levels, and secure new markets for agricultural and other products.
xi. Facilitate the organisation and networking of women's groups.
xii. Improve statistical systems to make the paid and unpaid work of women visible and valued, and to ensure that data is disaggregated by sex to understand and monitor the eradication of poverty among women.
xiii. Provide awareness and consultations on the gender impact of economic reform policies and WTO membership.
xiv. Promote the special role that developed countries of the Commonwealth have in fostering the development of the less developed countries, and support that role in fulfilling their commitment to provide 0.7 per cent of GDP to overseas development assistance.

3.38 The Secretariat will support member countries by:

i. Undertaking capacity-building for NWMs, trade, finance, other ministries and government agencies, and CSOs, in order to mainstream gender analysis in the macroeconomic framework.
ii. Developing the methodology and tools for extending gender analysis of budgets to the revenue side, and working in specific countries to institutionalise GRB processes.
iii. Continuing its advocacy for gender analysis in international, regional and national trade negotiations, and providing

practical assistance to governments in negotiating international trading agreements that support gender equality.

iv. Developing guidelines and handbooks for issues related to social protection and workers' rights, and providing technical assistance to specific countries.

v. Fostering links between entrepreneurs at all levels, including grassroots women producers and organisations, e.g., through the Commonwealth Business Women's Network (CBWN).

vi. Providing advice to and enhancing the capacity of governments to increase the enrolment, retention and the achievement of girls in the educational system and improve the quality of education.

vii. Promoting best practice on infant and maternal mortality through the development and dissemination of case studies.

viii. Supporting member countries in adhering to the model Commonwealth Code of Conduct for regulating the migration of skilled health personnel.

ix. Promoting South-South and North-South dialogue for capacity development, information and knowledge sharing, and disseminating best practice on specific issues (e.g., migration, retention of girls in school).

x. Working, in the context of specific countries, to introduce strategies for agriculture and export competitiveness that support gender equality.

xi. Carrying out a gender impact assessment of the HIPC initiative and the Debt Recording and Management Systems covering the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases so that lessons learned and best practices can be shared throughout the Commonwealth.

IV Gender and HIV/AIDS

3.39 HIV/AIDS should be considered within the framework of sexual and reproductive health. This should be an integrated approach that recognises broader issues and goes beyond health interventions to reduce gender inequality. It should recognise the impact of broader social and economic policy on HIV/AIDS and the impact of HIV/AIDS on national productivity. The UN Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS[15] gave international recognition to the critical need to tackle gender inequality, which lies at the heart of vulnerability to and impact of HIV/AIDS. International, regional and national responses to HIV/AIDS increasingly acknowledge that women and girls are hardest hit by the pandemic. The impact and role of men and boys on gender equality and healthy sexuality is acknowledged.

3.40 HIV/AIDS has reached crisis proportions in Sub-Saharan Africa, is increasing dramatically in the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, with enormous implications for small states. At their Abuja meeting in 2003, Commonwealth Heads of Government highlighted its devastating impact. They recognised the fundamental importance of confronting the pandemic if their countries are to meet the MDGs. The World Council of Churches (WCC) and its member churches have made efforts to overcome barriers to addressing sexuality, especially the 'culture of silence' and religion. Two-thirds of the five million people who became infected with HIV in 2003 were Commonwealth citizens. HIV/AIDS greatly affects people of working age, and in the most severely affected countries it is decimating the human resources necessary to sustain social and economic growth.

3.41 Poverty and gender inequalities are driving factors in the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS. Women's unequal political and legal status perpetuates poverty, discrimination and lack of opportunity in social, economic and cultural spheres of activity, including access to and ownership of land and property, inheritance rights and decent work opportunities. In this context, women and girls, faced with the need to support their families, often feel they have little choice but to engage in sex work or in transactional sex (sex for food, rent, clothing, bus fare), which makes them even more vulnerable to HIV infection. Migrant workers and refugees constitute another particularly vulnerable group. It is also noted that the connection between sex and tourism cannot be ignored.

3.42 Women also bear the brunt of the social and economic impact of HIV/AIDS. Women of all ages, especially older women, very young women, young married women and adolescent girls, bear unsustainable burdens of care for the sick and dying in their homes, face additional health-care costs for HIV-affected family members, and in many cases cope with extra dependants such as

orphans. Research has shown that up to 90 per cent of HIV care is provided in the home. In some cases, over 43 per cent of total household labour is lost to AIDS-affected households because of care responsibilities.

3.43 In a number of countries, there are growing numbers of child/orphan-headed households containing children with few prospects for education, socialisation or economic opportunities as they grow up. At the end of 2001, 11 million children in Sub-Saharan Africa under the age of 15 had lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS. It is expected that by 2010, there will be 20 million AIDS orphans in this age group.

3.44 Women and girls are more susceptible to contracting HIV not only for biological reasons but because power imbalances can make it difficult for them to negotiate safe sex or refuse unwanted sex. Gender-based violence, particularly rape, is both a cause and consequence of HIV transmission. The high incidence of violence and forced sex experienced by women, as well as their abandonment or eviction from their homes and communities when they are HIV positive, create enormous difficulties for women who lack economic means or alternatives. Illiteracy, lack of information or educational opportunities and inappropriate prevention messages further exacerbate the vulnerability of women and girls to infection. It is critical to increase opportunities and create an enabling environment for women and girls to be empowered to make choices and informed decisions over their lives and relationships in the home, workplace and community.

3.45 Further, in over-crowded urban as well as rural areas, basic health and social services are grossly inadequate, especially in terms of treatment of opportunistic infections, voluntary testing and counselling facilities, anti-retroviral treatment and social and family service support. The challenges faced by most developing countries are the lack of access to affordable drugs and to treatment monitoring facilities and lack of formal care arrangements. Even where support exists, many women and men are not aware of the services available to them at local and community levels.

3.46 Lack of availability and access to female-controlled prevention methods are a critical factor in the increasing infection rate among women and girls. Women are twice as likely as men to contract HIV from a single act of unprotected sex, but they remain dependent on male co-operation to protect themselves from infection. Greater attention needs to be paid to research and investment in microbicides, improving and effectively marketing the female condom, and exploring other forms of female-controlled prevention. Microbicides are a promising solution to a social problem as they would enable women to protect themselves from increased risk of sexually transmitted infections and HIV through a prevention method that does not require the consent or knowledge of a partner. It would be important to ensure not only the safety and effectiveness of microbicides, but also that the products are available and accessible to women. Support for the development of microbicides should be part of a wider strategy of building capacity and infrastructure in primary health care systems, as well as the social and economic empowerment of women.

3.47 While many policies and commitments made by governments and international organisations make the connection between gender and HIV/AIDS explicit, these commitments are not always implemented. Some examples of best practice are emerging, but there is often a big gap between policy and practice because of insufficient resources, training and capacity, especially where public sectors and basic service provision have been cut back. There is a need for greater attention to be paid to the implementation of policies and commitments, and for increased monitoring of and accountability for service delivery on the part of multilateral institutions, governments and CSOs. Clear indicators also need to be developed to assist Commonwealth member countries to effectively monitor the impacts of HIV/AIDS programmes that are being implemented by national governments, NGOs, and regional and international agencies.

3.48 The PoA supports and strengthens implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS agreed at the UN General Assembly Special Session in 2001. These commitments, targets and strategies include the empowerment of women as a strategy for reducing their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, and

alleviating the social and economic impact of the disease on women and girls. The PoA also carries forward the emphasis on women-controlled methods of prevention highlighted in the Communiqué from Commonwealth Health Ministers to CHOGM in Abuja (2003).

3.49 Consequently, activities in this critical area will focus on:

i. Mainstreaming gender equality into multisectoral, national, regional and international programmes on HIV/AIDS, including the World Health Organization '3 by 5' Initiative that aims to have 3 million people in developing countries on treatment by 2005.
ii. Promoting reproductive and sexual health and rights as agreed in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women and their Five-Year Reviews, as a means to achieving the MDGs.
iii. Promoting partnerships between women and men, and girls and boys to reduce the prevalence and impact of HIV/AIDS.
iv. Strengthening institutional partnerships to support the implementation of effective strategies to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS and address the social and economic impact of the pandemic, in particular on women and girls.
v. Increasing the emphasis on provision of women-friendly health services for the prevention of HIV/AIDS, and for the treatment, care and support of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHAs), in partnership with their families.
vi. Preventing new HIV infections among young people, particularly girls and young women, through support and promotion of the adolescent reproductive health programme and the Commonwealth Youth Ambassadors for Positive Living Initiative, and through Commonwealth sport and development programmes that promote healthy living.
vii Highlighting the role of men and boys in promoting gender equality and healthy sexuality.
viii Promoting recognition of the role that HIV positive women have to play both in society and in fighting HIV/AIDS, and protecting the property rights of HIV positive women.

3.50 Governments are encouraged to take action to:

i. Strengthen gender mainstreaming in multisectoral HIV/AIDS policies and programmes.
ii. Promote the increased availability of more affordable and easily accessible female-controlled methods of preventing HIV and other sexually transmitted infections as one component of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health strategy and an HIV/AIDS prevention strategy that address gender equality and women's empowerment.
iii. Intensify and expand awareness programmes on the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS, including in school curricula, as well as through strategies at all levels of society to empower women and girls, particularly those who are marginalised, to negotiate sexual encounters and/or refuse unsafe or unwanted sex.
iv. Promote the involvement of men and boys in HIV/AIDS programmes and strategies at all levels of society including education in eliminating gender stereotypes, access to reproductive and sexual health services, and encouraging safe and responsible sexual and reproductive behaviour.
v. Ensure equal access and effective and efficient provision of treatment, care and support for women and men of all ages, including women with disabilities.
vi. Develop measures to address the specific needs of HIV/AIDS infected and affected women, including care-givers and those at risk of infection through gender-based violence and poverty.
vii. Introduce community programmes that promote dialogue and partnership between women and men on the prevention of HIV/AIDS.
viii. Mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on human resources and strengthen capacity building in this area.
ix. Protect the rights of PLHAs and take urgent measures to address stigma and discrimination.
x. Take legal, social and economic measures to reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV/AIDS.
xi. Promote the full involvement and participation of PLHAs and those most vulnerable, including women and girls, in the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of HIV/AIDS programmes.

xii. Address the links between HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health, and promote the full integration of HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health programming and services.
xiii. Conduct research on factors contributing to sexual behaviours that lead to the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections to support the development of appropriate interventions.
xiv. Articulate the impact of HIV/AIDS on the economy.
xv. Allocate adequate budget for HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support at all levels of government to ensure sustainability beyond donor support.

3.51 The Secretariat will support member countries by:

i. Providing advice and technical assistance in the development and implementation of gender-sensitive, multisectoral HIV/AIDS policies and programmes.
ii. Developing training and resource materials on gender equality for use in public awareness programmes, focusing on young people in particular.
iii. Facilitating the sharing of gender-sensitive strategies and best practice for reducing the incidence of HIV/AIDS.
iv. Promoting, strengthening and expanding the Commonwealth Youth Ambassadors for Positive Living Initiative across the Commonwealth.
v. Ensuring that the Commonwealth participates actively in international, regional and national bodies and networks, and strengthens its strategic partnerships to enhance effective implementation of gender-sensitive responses to HIV/AIDS that take into account the specific needs of women and men.
vi. Promoting the development of sports programmes for youth and women that build self-esteem and promote healthy living.
vii. Facilitating the exchange of regional experiences and lessons learned between Commonwealth countries, for example, the sharing of African experiences with other regions of the Commonwealth.

Notes

10. The Special Tribunals referred to are the International Criminal Tribunal of the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

11. Beijing Platform for Action, paragraph 143 (e) (iii-iv). New York: United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, 1995.

12. For example, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); the Additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); and the four key gender-related ILO Conventions (C100 on equal remuneration, C111 on freedom from discrimination at work, C156 on workers with family responsibilities and C183 on maternity protection).

13. Widow inheritance refers to the passing of a widow from one male relative to another in some societies.

14. Australia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Canada, Fiji Islands, India, Kenya, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, St Kitts and Nevis, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, United Kingdom and Zambia. See Building on Achievements: Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development and its Update (2000-2005). London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2003.

15. Adopted at the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS in 2001.

4. IMPLEMENTING THE PoA

4.1 This section focuses on how Commonwealth governments and the Secretariat will seek to implement the gender mainstreaming approach outlined in the four critical areas above.

Partnerships

4.2 A key feature of the Secretariat is its status as a trusted partner of member countries, enabling it to establish dynamic and sustainable partnerships between governments and other stakeholders. Partnership building is a vital strategy in mainstreaming gender equality for the following reasons:

i. Collaboration with governments and other partners minimises overlaps and duplication of effort, fosters greater coherence of approaches and programmes, facilitates monitoring based on agreed targets and appropriate gender indicators, and ensures cost-effectiveness.
ii. Governments can benefit from the capacity and experience of CSOs in addressing political, legal, economic, social and cultural gender equality issues taking into account the need to facilitate CSO participation, through allocation of appropriate resources.
iii. Groups such as CSOs, the media and the private sector are able to provide alternative approaches to government policies, lobby governments to take action on special issues, monitor government action on critical matters and provide additional resources and expertise in specialist fields.
iv. The media and cultural and religious organisations are powerful agencies in raising public awareness and promoting changes in attitude on gender issues. They can provide positive images of women, promote gender-sensitive reporting and highlight the critical role of both women and men as change agents.
v. Partnerships with international, regional and other agencies provide an important mechanism for the wider dissemination of knowledge, information, experience and good practice.

4.3 The Secretariat will strengthen existing partnerships and create new ones, particularly with stakeholders who have expertise and experience in the four critical areas of the PoA. Partners include:

i. Commonwealth governments;
ii. Commonwealth inter-governmental organisations: the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth of Learning (COL);
iii. Commonwealth associations, e.g., CPA, CLGF, CMJA, CBWN, CWN and CGF (see Appendix V);
iv. universities, public service training institutions and other tertiary educational institutions;
v. CSOs;
vi. the private sector;
vii. the media; and
viii. international organisations including the UN and its agencies, other multilateral agencies including the major financial and trade institutions, regional bodies (see Appendix VI), and bilateral agencies.

4.4 Men, boys and young people are essential partners in mainstreaming gender equality, and it is critical that the Commonwealth engage actively with organisations that work with men, boys and young people on gender equality issues in collaboration with women's organisations and CSOs committed to gender equality.

4.5 The Secretariat will promote a Commonwealth voice on gender equality and mainstreaming, through strengthening its advocacy, brokering and catalytic role with member governments and other partners at the national, regional and international levels.

Knowledge, information and capacity building

4.6 Generating new knowledge and information sharing are two of the Commonwealth's strengths. The Secretariat will continue to contribute to the global body of information, documenting and disseminating best practice on gender equality and mainstreaming to inform the development of gender-aware policies, plans and programmes. The Secretariat will explore enhanced ways of delivering learner-centred and training-

oriented materials, including via information and communications technologies (ICTs) and distance-education, as a strategy for reaching a wider audience.

4.7 Through its gender website, the Secretariat's Knowledge-Based Network (KBN) will continue to provide current information and resource materials for policy-makers, parliamentarians, local councillors, women's organisations, activists and others. This will be complemented by the STPD newsletter, *Link-In to Education, Gender and Health*. Gender policy briefs for Commonwealth ministerial meetings and selected global conferences will also keep Commonwealth women and men in touch with key issues, and provide relevant information for lobbying for the inclusion of gender issues at such meetings.

4.8 NWMs will continue to receive information and policy advice on gender issues through the Secretariat's dedicated electronic Help-Desk. This also responds to requests for information to support capacity-building needs at national, regional and international levels. Governments are encouraged to provide NWMs and other gender change agents with leadership and negotiating skills to enhance their gender mainstreaming role and enable them to better influence national policy-making.

4.9 The Secretariat, in collaboration with its partners, will provide capacity-building programmes in the four critical areas of the PoA for NWMs and other key partners, including ministries of finance, health, education, planning and trade, parliamentarians, the judiciary, universities, public service training institutions, the private sector and CSOs. It will also organise national, regional, pan-Commonwealth and international consultations and workshops for sharing experiences and best practice, building capacity, and developing new tools and methodologies.

4.10 Gender training programmes are essential in universities, public service training institutions and other tertiary institutions, and a gender perspective needs to be integrated into all training and capacity-building programmes for the public service, particularly at senior managerial, professional and administrative levels. The Secretariat will work with COL, the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM), and other partners to support governments' efforts to institutionalise gender training programmes.

4.11 At the request of member governments, the Secretariat will undertake policy advisory missions on the application of Commonwealth tools and methodologies to national situations, e.g., GMS, GRBs and the integrated approach to gender-based violence, and field short- and long-term gender experts.

4.12 Governments are encouraged to improve the collection, analysis and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data for policy, planning and implementation processes.

4.13 In many Commonwealth countries, optimal use of ICTs for poverty eradication through advocacy and capacity building has not been possible. Women in general, and particularly those in rural communities, tend to have less access to ICTs and skills training than men and young people. Bridging the 'gender digital divide' for women and girls through more effective use of mobile telephones, the Internet, e-mails, websites, CD-ROMs and other e-materials, should be encouraged.

Resources

4.14 Adequate financial, human and technological resources are essential for effective implementation of the PoA. Promoting equality between women and men is not the sole responsibility of Women's/Gender Affairs Ministries, but of all institutions in society including the state system, private sector and civil society. Governments should ensure that their budgets allocate resources to appropriately and effectively provide equal opportunities and benefits for women and men, and girls and boys while also ensuring that programmes for men do not take away from the resources dedicated to women.

4.15 Increased donor support is necessary for member countries to invest more in health, education, capacity building, agriculture, water and sanitation, and other key components of infrastructure that are critical for poverty eradication and

enhancing growth. Gender equality remains central in all these areas.

4.16 Governments need to take a multisectoral approach to key development issues facing member countries such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence, and post-conflict reconstruction.

4.17 The Commonwealth Secretariat is encouraged to strengthen and continue its engagement with governments, donor partners, international financial institutions, CSOs and Commonwealth associations to ensure that where possible priority is given to allocating budgetary support to the implementation of the PoA at national levels and within the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

4.18 Governments should establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of national and sectoral budget allocation and expenditure. The gender impacts of PRSPs; gender-aware, pro-poor rural development initiatives; public sector reforms; and other national and sector programmes should also be closely monitored and evaluated.

4.19 The Secretariat's reporting on the implementation of the PoA will be harmonised with CEDAW and BPfA processes as far as possible, in order to reduce the burden of reporting on NWMs and to avoid duplication.

4.20 The Secretary-General will continue to report on the implementation of the PoA to Heads of Government at their biennial summits and to senior officials' meetings. Reports will be based on information provided by governments and the Secretariat.[16] In keeping with the partnership approach to the implementation of the PoA, governments are encouraged to compile their reports in consultation with CSOs, and the Secretariat will report on its co-operation with partners.

4.21 The Secretariat will integrate monitoring of the PoA into its 4-year strategic planning and 2-year operational planning cycles. The positioning of gender equality and equity as a cross-cutting theme in the 2004–2008 Strategic Plan is expected to increase the gender impacts of the Secretariat's programmes on development and democracy in all member countries and regions. Gender audits of the Secretariat's work will be undertaken to assess its impact in promoting equality between women and men in the Commonwealth.

4.22 Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers will meet periodically to review the progress made and constraints encountered by governments and the Secretariat in implementing the PoA, share experiences, discuss lessons learned and consider new and emerging gender issues. Ministers will make recommendations to Heads of Government for more effective implementation of the PoA. Recognising the need for cost-effectiveness, Ministers will make increasing use of opportunities for consultation offered by ICTs, and the possibility of meeting in the wings of other regional and global meetings. In this context, Heads of NWMs will be encouraged to meet during annual meetings of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. 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, evaluating and reviewing the PoA.

4.23 This PoA provides the framework for Commonwealth action on gender equality in the decade ahead. It forms part of the Commonwealth's contribution to the Beijing+10 Global Review in 2005 and complements the global Millennium Development Compact that has been launched with specific, time-bound and quantifiable goals and targets. The Commonwealth family of developed and developing countries, reflecting both diversity and common values, must build on its strengths and resources to contribute to an equal world for women, men and young people.

Notes

16 Questionnaires to be completed by governments for the report will be harmonised with UN reporting processes, and will be supplemented by reports prepared for other purposes such as CEDAW. The information supplied will also be used to produce publications and training materials.

ACRONYMS

ACU	Association of Commonwealth Universities
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CAPAM	Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management
CBWN	Commonwealth Business Women's Network
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CGF	Commonwealth Games Federation
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CMAG	Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group
CMJA	Commonwealth Magistrates and Judges Association
CLA	Commonwealth Lawyers Association
CLGF	Commonwealth Local Government Forum
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
CPA	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	civil society organisation
CWN	Commonwealth Women's NGO Network
DRMS	Debt Recording and Management System
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GMS	Gender Management System
GRB	Gender-Responsive Budget
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Countries
ICTs	information and communications technologies
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IDP	internally displaced person
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
ILO	International Labour Organization
KBN	(Commonwealth) Knowledge-Based Network
LDCs	least developed countries
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NWMs	national women's machineries
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSAGI	Office of the Special Adviser for Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women
PLHA	People Living with HIV/AIDS
PoA	(Commonwealth) Plan of Action
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
STPD	Social Transformation Programmes Division (Commonwealth Secretariat)
SWAps	sector wide approaches
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDAW	UN Division for the Advancement of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Human Rights
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WAMM	(Commonwealth) Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting
WHO	World Health Organization

APPENDIX I
THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs)

At the UN General Assembly in 2000, Heads of State and Government took stock of the gross inequalities in human development worldwide and recognised "their collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity [and] equality at the global level".

In addition to declaring their support for freedom, democracy and human rights, they set eight goals for development and poverty eradication, to be achieved by 2015, with targets and indicators to assess progress in implementation. The goals are to:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

APPENDIX II
THE 12 CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION (BPFA)

A Women and poverty
B Education and training of women
C Women and health
D Violence against women
E Women and armed conflict
F Women and the economy
G Women in power and decision-making
H Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women
I Human rights of women
J Women and the media
K Women and the environment
L The girl-child

APPENDIX III
INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL INSTRUMENTS RELATING TO HUMAN AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- The four Geneva Conventions (1949) and Additional Protocols (1977)
- The Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (1951)
- The Equal Remuneration Convention No.100 (ILO) (1951)
- The Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, No.111 (1958)
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1966)
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966)
- The Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergencies and Armed Conflicts (1974)
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979) and Optional Protocol (1999)
- The UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984)
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and Optional Protocols (2000)
- The Vienna Declaration (1993)
- The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993)
- The Statutes of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (UNSC Resolution 827) (1993)
- International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), (1994)
- The Statutes of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (UNSC Resolution 955) (1994)
- The Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) (1995)
- The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (1997)

- The Special Court for Sierra Leone (UNSC Resolution 1315) (2000)
- UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000)
- General Assembly (A/56/863): Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (Brahimi Report) (2000)
- The Windhoek Declaration (Namibian Plan of Action) (2000)
- The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (2003)
- UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/58/241 on Illicit Arms and Light Weapons (2003)
- The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) (1969)

Commonwealth/ Regional Conventions

- The European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950)
- The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (1981)
- Protocol on the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003)
- The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (1995)
- The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Declaration on Gender and Development (1997) and its Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women and Children (1998)
- The African Charter on the Rights of the Child (1999)
- The Commonwealth Victoria Falls Declaration of Principles for Promoting the Human Rights of Women (1994); Hong Kong Conclusions (1996); and Georgetown Recommendations and Strategies for Action on the Human Rights of Women and the Girl Child (1997)

APPENDIX IV
THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT'S MISSION STATEMENT, GOALS AND PROGRAMME AREAS IN THE 2004-2008 STRATEGIC PLAN

MISSION STATEMENT

We work as a trusted partner for all Commonwealth people as:

- *a force for peace, democracy, equality and good governance;*
- *a catalyst for global consensus-building; and*
- *a source of assistance for sustainable development and poverty eradication.*

GOALS

Goal 1: To support member countries to prevent or resolve conflicts, strengthen democracy and the rule of law and achieve greater respect for human rights.

Goal 2: To support pro-poor policies for economic growth and sustainable development in member countries.

Goal 1 (Peace and Democracy) will be achieved through 4 programmes:

- Good Offices for Peace
- Democracy
- Rule of Law
- Human Rights

Goal 2 (Pro-Poor Growth and Sustainable Development) will be achieved through 9 programmes:

- International Trade
- Investment
- Finance and Debt
- Public Sector Development
- Environmentally Sustainable Development
- Small States
- Education
- Health
- Young People

These programmes will be supported by 3 cross-cutting programmes:

- Gender Equality and Equity
- Capacity Building and Institutional Development
- Secretariat Governance, Management and Communications

APPENDIX V
COMMONWEALTH INTER-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS

INTER-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

- Commonwealth Secretariat
- Commonwealth Foundation
- Commonwealth of Learning

COMMONWEALTH ASSOCIATIONS

- Association of Commonwealth Archivists and Record Managers
- Association of Commonwealth Universities
- British Commonwealth Ex-Services League
- Commonwealth Association of Architects
- Commonwealth Association for Mental Handicap and Development Disabilities
- Commonwealth Association of Paediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition
- Commonwealth Association of Planners
- Commonwealth Association of Scientific Agricultural Societies
- Commonwealth Association of Surveying and Land Economy
- Commonwealth Broadcasting Association
- Commonwealth Business Council
- Commonwealth Business Women's Network
- Commonwealth Countries League
- Commonwealth Dental Association
- Commonwealth Engineers Council
- Commonwealth Games Federation
- Commonwealth Geographical Bureau
- Commonwealth Group of Family Planning Associations
- Commonwealth Institute
- Commonwealth Jewish Council
- Commonwealth Journalists Association
- Commonwealth Forestry Association
- Commonwealth Forum for Project Management
- Commonwealth Human Ecology Council
- Commonwealth Lawyers Association
- Commonwealth Legal Advisory Service
- Commonwealth Legal Education Association
- Commonwealth Local Government Forum
- Commonwealth Magistrates and Judges Association
- Commonwealth Medical Association Trust
- Commonwealth Nurses Federation
- Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
- Commonwealth Pharmaceutical Association
- Commonwealth Press Union
- Commonwealth Relations Trust
- Commonwealth Society for the Deaf-Sound Seekers
- Commonwealth Trade Union Council
- Commonwealth Veterinary Association
- Commonwealth Women's NGO Network
- Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council
- Conference of Commonwealth Auditors General
- Conference of Commonwealth Meteorologists
- Council for Education in the Commonwealth
- Disabled People International Commonwealth Committee to DPI/Europe
- English-Speaking Union of the Commonwealth
- Institute of Commonwealth Studies
- League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers
- Organisation of Commonwealth United Nations Associations
- Royal Agricultural Society of the Commonwealth
- Royal Commonwealth Society
- Royal Over-Seas League
- Sight Savers International (the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind)
- Soroptimist International Commonwealth Group
- Victoria League for Commonwealth Friendship

APPENDIX VI
REGIONAL BODIES

- African Union (AU)
- Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)
- Caribbean Community (CARICOM)
- Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)
- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
- Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (ForSec)
- Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)
- South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC)
- Southern African Development Community (SADC)

APPENDIX VII
COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT PUBLICATIONS ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN KEY SECTORS/ DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

The GMS Toolkit: An Integrated Resource for Implementing the Gender Management System Series (2004); ISBN 0-85092-784-4

Gender and Human Rights in the Commonwealth: Some Critical Issues for Action in the Decade 2005-2015 (2004); ISBN 0 85092-808-7

Chains of Fortune: Linking Women Producers and Workers with Global Markets (2004); ISBN 0-85092-798-6

Mainstreaming Informal Employment and Gender in Poverty Reduction (2004); ISBN 0-85092-797-8

Gender Impacts of Government Revenue Collection: the Case of Taxation (2004); ISBN 0-85092-788-9

Gender and Debt (2004); ISBN 0-85092-776-5

Gender-Sensitive Approaches to HIV/AIDS: A Training Kit for Peer Educators (2004)

Moving from Policy to Practice - Men can make a Difference: Reducing the Spread and Impact of HIV/AIDS through Constructive Involvement of Men (2004)

Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty Eradication and the Millennium Development Goals (2003); ISBN 0-85092-752-8

Women and Men in Partnership for Post-Conflict Reconstruction (2003); ISBN 0-85092-744-7

Gender Mainstreaming in the Multilateral Trading System (2003); ISBN 0-85092-736-6

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