

**Reporting on 2007 CHOGM: Reflections from Kampala**

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**by  
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First of all, permit me, Chairperson, to acknowledge with gratitude, the kindness of your invitation and kind opening remarks. I bring you the warm greetings of the Secretary General who sends his apology. He would have liked to be with you today but has several pre-departure engagements to fulfill in the short time left to him and is currently on mission overseas. This is my first opportunity to address the Council in my capacity as Deputy Secretary General and to share experiences and ideas with you in this important area of work.

Before I do so, I would like to take this opportunity to express the Secretariat's gratitude to the Council for Education in the Commonwealth (CEC) for its long standing contribution and excellent work in support of the Commonwealth's education programmes and in development of education throughout the Commonwealth. Your track record speaks for itself and we see the CEC as a valuable and indispensable Commonwealth resource.

Before I give you my reflections on the deliberations of Heads of Government in Kampala and the implications for our work programmes, especially in the education sector, I would like firstly to take stock of the development challenges facing the Commonwealth at present.

While mandates from Commonwealth Heads of Government, who meet every two years, and from Ministerial Meetings, establish priority areas of action for the Secretariat, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provide a framework for the development programmes of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The year 2007 should have been a significant milestone on the road to attaining the MDGs, representing as it does the halfway point between the 2000 adoption of the goals and their 2015 target date. However, despite stronger growth rates globally and across most regions in recent years, there has been uneven progress towards the attainment of the MDGs. Regrettably, the situation in the Commonwealth has reflected that in the wider global community.

Equally regrettably in all of this, women and the young suffer disproportionately. Two-thirds of those below the poverty line and two-thirds of those who are unable to read or write are women. Half a million women die every year in childbirth, most of whom live in Commonwealth countries. Many more

women than men now suffer from HIV/AIDS. We all collectively have an obligation to this and future generations to halt and reverse these trends.

And if we are to do so, there is arguably no more crucial task to be undertaken either within or beyond the boundaries of the Commonwealth than the promotion and development of education – the fundamental societal process by which knowledge, skills and values are transmitted from generation to generation and the very basis of an enhanced quality of life for all peoples. To paraphrase a great American President “Our progress [as a people] can be no swifter than our progress in education. The human mind is our fundamental resource”.

This has particular resonance in what is in demographic terms a young Commonwealth, with nearly half of our citizens, that is, just under a billion people, now under 18 years of age and fully 60% of the Commonwealth population being under the age of 30.

Against this background, it is not surprising that among the several priorities enunciated by the Heads of Government in Kampala were their undertaking to redouble efforts to deliver “education for all” and their agreement to renew emphasis on education quality at all levels, and specifically on the measurement and improvement of learning.

Let me now turn to the Kampala CHOGM and its outcomes more broadly speaking. I will return to education after painting with somewhat broad strokes the proceedings and outcomes in some other important areas.

## **CHOGM**

CHOGM in Kampala was a well attended event with forty-eight of the associations fifty-three members represented (and two of the absentees were on suspension). Of the forth-eight members attending, thirty-six did so at the level of Head of Government and twelve at the level of Vice-President or Deputy Prime Minister.

As you will be aware, Her Majesty The Queen, as is traditional, attended and spoke at the Opening Ceremony. President Museveni, as host, ably presided over the proceedings and, in this context, it might be noted that Uganda proved to be an exemplary host.

It should also be noted here that Prince Charles visited Uganda during CHOGM and participated in a number of civil society events.

The biennial CHOGM has evolved into being an event of high global profile, attracting almost all Commonwealth members and doing so at the highest

political level. This is critical to an association that prides itself on a collegial approach to addressing important issues.

The Heads of Government Meeting was preceded by two weeks of activities. There was a Youth Forum attended by more than 120 young people from 45 countries, a Business Forum attended by 900 persons from 40 countries, a People's Forum attended by 1,500 from 59 countries, (including a number of non-Commonwealth members) and the Foreign Ministers Meeting. All of this once again amply demonstrated that the Commonwealth is an alliance of both governments and peoples.

Let me now cite some of the main outcomes of CHOGM. Firstly, I will note that in Kampala Heads of Government unanimously selected H.E. Mr Kamalesh Sharma to be the next Secretary-General of the Commonwealth. He will assume office on April 1, 2008.

### **Commonwealth Membership**

At their meeting in Malta in November 2005, Commonwealth Heads of Government mandated the Secretary-General to convene a high level Working Committee to consider issues relating to membership of the Commonwealth and to report its findings to CHOGM 2007. As a consequence an 8-member high level Committee on Commonwealth Membership was established. It comprised prominent persons from across the Commonwealth.

The Committee met twice (Dec 06 and May 07). It was briefed on the views expressed by member Governments and considered several written submissions in this regard from individuals and organisations. Most of the views indicated general support for a cautious approach to an increase in membership and an approach based on clear and consistent criteria.

You should know that the Committee recommended that an aspirant member should, as a general rule, have had a historic constitutional link with an existing member, or a substantial relationship with the Commonwealth generally, or with a particular group of its members; should adhere to the Commonwealth's fundamental values, principles and priorities; should show demonstrable commitment to democracy and democratic processes, including free and fair elections and representative legislatures; the rule of law and independence of the judiciary; to good governance, including a well-trained public service and transparent public accounts; and to the protection of human rights, freedom of expression, and equality of opportunity.

The Committee also recommended that new members should be encouraged to join the Commonwealth Foundation, and to foster participatory democracy through regular civil society consultations.

Importantly, as well, the Committee recommended a four step process for applicants which would entail (i) informal assessment by the Secretary-General; (ii) consultation with existing member governments; (iii) invitation to make a formal application; (iv) evidence of democratic processes and popular support.

Heads endorsed the recommendations of the Committee on Membership and agreed that they would consider the application of any prospective member at the next CHOGM, and if consensus were to be reached, the applicant country would join the Commonwealth and be invited to attend subsequent meetings.

### **Munyonyo Statement on Respect and Understanding**

A major aspect of the 2007 CHOGM was the consideration of the Report of the Commission on Respect and Understanding and the adoption of the related Munyonyo Statement. The Malta CHOGM in 2005 had observed that marginalisation, exclusion and poverty, ethnic identity and differences in cultural practices and political beliefs are some of the issues that contribute to inter-communal tensions. Heads expressed then the view that the Commonwealth, with its richness of diversity and reach across the globe, had much to offer the larger international community in this area.

Pursuant to the Malta CHOGM, the **Commonwealth Commission on Respect & Understanding** was named by the Secretary-General with a mandate 'to explore initiatives to promote mutual understanding and respect among all faiths and communities in the Commonwealth'.

The Commission, chaired by the Indian Nobel-laureate Professor Amartya Sen and comprising other eminent persons with a wealth of experience and insights to share from across the Commonwealth, presented to the Kampala CHOGM its findings and recommendations on the way forward in a report entitled ***Civil Paths to Peace***.

The Report provides a thoughtful and considered analysis of issues relevant to building tolerance and understanding of diversity amongst and within distinct societies, cultures and communities.

It explores and investigates a range of issues, including the connection between respect and understanding on the one hand, and disquiet, disaffection and violence, on the other; it explores the role of poverty and inequality in fostering disquiet; it emphasises that history and grievance are often intertwined – the past cannot be ignored since history matters to contemporary problems.

The Report underlines the important role the media and communication have to play in engendering understanding by presenting basic information in a fair, even-handed and non-inflammatory way. Of particular relevance to this audience is the importance given to education as a critical means for

engendering respect and understanding among diverse populations, in particular among the young, and as a vehicle for reducing marginalization.

The seven recommendations in the Report (which include addressing grievance and humiliation, women's political participation, education and the role of young people) were endorsed as well as the Secretary-General's call to develop concrete steps to give practical effect to the Report, taking into account the particular needs and situations of Commonwealth countries.

Heads directed that future Commonwealth action to promote respect and understanding should build on and extend existing Commonwealth programmes, at both national and international levels. In this context, they identified activities in relation to young people, women, education, and the media, as the priority fields of action. These programmes should also engage partners from civil society and other sectors. They also called for exchange of best practices and experiences among Commonwealth member countries.

Progress on this and other key mandates will be reviewed by Foreign Ministers at their next meeting, in New York in September.

### **Lake Victoria Action Plan on Climate Change**

The 2008 CHOGM addressed the important and eminently topical issue of climate change. This is an issue of particular relevance to the Commonwealth given the large number of small island and poor states among the membership. Indeed, it may be recalled that in September of last year, preceding CHOGM, Commonwealth Finance Ministers meeting in Guyana, considered climate change as the theme for their meeting, with special regard to the financial implications of addressing the issue. It is worth recalling also that the Commonwealth has been at the forefront on this issue, not only recently, but of longstanding. As long ago as 1989, Heads of Government meeting in Malaysia, adopted the Langkawi Declaration which noted then, and I quote, that "the greenhouse effect may lead to severe climate changes that could induce floods, droughts, and rising sea levels". Commonwealth Heads also called almost twenty years ago for the early conclusion of an international convention to protect and conserve the global climate.

At Kampala, a major outcome was the Lake Victoria Action Plan on Climate Change. This was an important statement which builds on the 1989 Langkawi Declaration on the Environment, underscoring once again that this is an area where the Commonwealth can use its collective voice to promote change. It is also an area that will rely heavily upon education to make a difference.

At Kampala the collective voice of the Commonwealth was heard on climate change.

The Lake Victoria Action Plan outlines a 6-point action plan. The Action Plan also states the following:

*“We believe that development itself is an important tool in addressing climate change , since a well educated and healthy society, with a diverse economy, is best placed to be flexible and to generate the necessary resources to invest in cleaner technologies and systems, and to fund adaptation measures ..... We invite the family of Commonwealth organizations to play a full part in promoting a better understanding of climate change and its impacts, and in addressing adaptation and mitigation challenges .”*

This is a clear challenge to education, and to higher and technical education in particular, to play a part in this endeavor.

In the Secretariat, we are now developing a Strategic Plan which will include measures to deliver a more focused capacity-building and technical assistance-oriented program to help member states.

### **Declaration on Transforming Societies**

A Kampala Declaration on Transforming Societies to Achieve Political, Economic and Human Development, was adopted. It will well be recalled that this was in fact the theme of the CHOGM. The Declaration cites the experience of newly industrialized members of the Commonwealth, and identifies a number of conditions considered propitious for transformation to occur. It was noted, importantly in this regard, that neither economic nor human development is possible in a sustainable way without democracy and good governance. Heads called on the Secretariat to assist in developing an action plan to facilitate transformation in member countries. This is an important and complex task which we are now seeking to take forward. As might have been expected, the role of education in social and economic transformation was fully recognized. In this regard, among the key areas cited for attention in the Kampala Declaration on Transforming Societies, were science and technology, and the according of high priority in public expenditure to education and training. Heads also, it will be noted, urged that the UN Secretary-General convene in 2008 a meeting involving Heads of Government, leaders of the private sector, and other interested parties to review progress on the MDGs, and to consider ways to assist those lagging behind. This was an acknowledgement of the importance of the linkages of the MDGs to transformation.

Let me cite a few other major decisions by Heads. They received the Report of the Steering Committee on Commonwealth Connects and accepted its recommendations, including the goals and priorities to be pursued in exploiting the comparative advantage of the Commonwealth to address the digital divide. Importantly, one of the five areas of focus of the Commonwealth Connects

programme is modernizing education and skills development. Operational priorities include initiatives that promote the sharing of ICT resources, the development of national ICT strategies, and strengthening of public private partnerships.

The CHOGM communiqué also called for reform of international institutions, and in this context, the Secretary-General was asked to establish a small representative group of Heads of Government to initiate advocacy and lobbying in support of reforms. The Secretary-General is undertaking consultations on taking this mandate forward.

Heads reiterated their support for the Doha Development Agenda. They also made a strong commitment to young people as the future of the Commonwealth. They underscored the role the young can play in supporting the Commonwealth's fundamental values and urged further efforts to include them in democratic institutions and processes. They agreed also that a new assessed contributions formula should be developed for the Commonwealth Youth Programme.

Let me now offer some further comments on education,

### **Priorities and Partners**

As in previous CHOGMs, the 2007 CHOGM served to renew commitment to key education goals and objectives, and to recognize the contribution of Commonwealth and other inter-governmental partners in this area. The Communiqué commended those member countries that have made progress in achieving Universal Primary Education and elimination of gender inequity in education. Heads supported the need to increase public spending on education at all levels and committed themselves to addressing a number of issues of concern in education to the Commonwealth, including: how to create conditions that would put in school the 30 million primary school aged children out of school across the Commonwealth; strengthening education systems in countries affected by conflict; improving quality at all levels; improving numeracy and literacy outcomes for primary aged children; expanding Commonwealth scholarships and fellowships; harnessing the expertise of the private sector, NGO, and civil society organizations to complement state provision in education, and skills training development.

It is very evident from the summary of issues highlighted that education remains a priority issue in the Commonwealth. CHOGM 2007 and its related workshops and specialized meetings served an important purpose. The Peoples Forum education workshops were, for example, a successful experiment in broadening exchange of ideas and experiences on key education issues in the Commonwealth. They brought together a range of Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth partners that are key to taking forward some of the

Commonwealth education programme activities. These included: Aga Khan Foundation, Action for Disability and Development, Action Aid, BUILD, Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit, Council for Education in the Commonwealth (CEC), Commonwealth Countries League, Commonwealth Education Fund, EMASA, Global March Against Child Labour, World Vision (Uganda), Uganda National Teachers Union, Commonwealth Human Ecology Council, Uganda National Association of the Deaf (UNAD), ANCEFA, Forum for Education NGOs in Uganda (FENU) World Vision International and many others.

## **Challenges**

From the perspective of the Commonwealth, while there has been some progress, it is important to acknowledge the huge challenges in education that remain. Thirty million primary age children are still out of school in Commonwealth countries. This is about one third of the world's total. A little less than two third of these that are out of school are girls. Eighty five per cent of the Commonwealth total out of school children live in six countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and the Asian sub-continent.

Increased demand for secondary education has emerged as a major issue in many developing Commonwealth countries. A number of international development agencies have taken note of this trend. And as in the case of universal primary education, efforts to provide wider access to secondary education have implications for governments' capacity and ability to deliver on quality.

In today's globalised world, it is important to reform tertiary education in order to cope with the ever changing demands and needs of socio-economic development. The wider Commonwealth family with its vast diverse resources and expertise has great potential to help member countries take a new course in tertiary education. In this regard I should mention that the Secretariat has taken action requested by 16CCEM ministers to examine the proposal to establish a Commonwealth Tertiary Education Facility. Following a meeting of senior officials on this proposal a report has now been sent to ministers. The Secretariat has also made progress in discussing with the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) expansion strategies for the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP).

It should be noted that while continuing to focus on the MDG goals of universal primary education and eliminating gender disparity, the Secretariat, despite the constraint of resources, has maintained active engagement in issues relating to the teaching profession, such as strengthening the supply and quality of teachers under the partnership programme with the Association for the Development of Education in Africa's (ADEA) working group on the teaching profession.

Ensuring gender equality in education has been a great challenge in some of our member countries. While girls remain more disadvantaged in many Commonwealth countries, higher drop out and lower achievement rates among boys at the secondary level in many countries is a big concern to us. This is especially true for the Caribbean and the developed Commonwealth countries.

We recently completed a five country study and are undertaking Commonwealth wide research to identify the factors that contribute to boys underachieving at school, and to document successful interventions.

So where do we go from here in the terms of our education programme as we begin the count down to towards the next CHOGM to be held in Trinidad & Tobago in 2009. The outcomes from Kampala will feed into a new Strategic Plan for the Commonwealth Secretariat for the four years 2008–12. The Strategic Plan will take account of the priorities in education that have been agreed by Heads and, as well, by Education Ministers who voiced these very clearly at their Cape Town meeting in December 2006.

Let me conclude by emphasizing the importance of partners in assisting the Secretariat carry out its role and facilitating the achievement of education goals by member states. While the Education Section has a very important mandate, it has just eight staff and an annual programme budget of around £500,000.

We are committed to:

- raising awareness and leveraging policy positions and resources for the Commonwealth;
- generating new knowledge and information through cutting edge policy research, materials and tools;
- monitoring education trends in the Commonwealth;
- providing targeted technical assistance for innovative pilot programmes;
- and
- facilitating the creation of supportive networks for educators.

We cannot achieve any of this on our own. I have already spoken about collaboration with our Commonwealth sister agencies in education but we also work closely with international and regional organisations, professional bodies, civil society and increasingly, the private sector. UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, are important global partners in education. We work with them on specific education issues of global mutual interest. We continue to collaborate closely with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU). Since 1997 CCEM in Botswana the Secretariat has done everything possible to involve civil society partners in our

education programmes and we continue to work with our partners to develop structures aimed at increasing effectiveness.

Before I conclude, as many of you know, Ann Keeling, our Director for STPD under which the Education Section falls is leaving the Secretariat. In the short time that Ann has led STPD she has made a great impact on the work of that Division. In particular, Ann has made every effort to strengthen the relationship between the Secretariat and our intergovernmental and Civil Society partners as well as the private sector. She leaves behind a strong basis for her successor to build on in furthering the development of our work with partners.

Finally, I would like to close by saying that we are delighted that the Government of Malaysia has offered to host the 17<sup>th</sup> Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in 2009. We have already commenced planning for this meeting. This is absolutely necessary since Commonwealth Education Ministers meetings are traditionally high profile and complex events. As many of you know, in Cape Town in 2006, 1300 representatives from teachers' organisations, youth groups, civil society, academia and the private sector joined with ministers and senior officials to review education in the Commonwealth and map out the future. We expect the 2009 meeting in Malaysia to be a spectacular event, not least because it will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Commonwealth Education Ministers Meeting. We consider also that 2009 will be an appropriate time to begin to look beyond the MDG end date of 2015 and forge a Commonwealth vision for the future of education. In a fast changing world, both politically and technologically, national borders are becoming less and less relevant in education as in other areas. We have to seize the opportunities for strengthening and expanding education in a borderless world and utilize effectively the potential of education for improving the quality of life of Commonwealth peoples. There is no clearer path than this to entrenching Commonwealth values and no firmer ground on which to anchor the twin pillars of democracy and development.

Thank you.

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