

BACKGROUND ON THE 1st – 7th WAMMs

Background

Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meetings (WAMMs) have been held triennially since 1985, i.e., over the last 20 years. They have provided strategic opportunities for Ministers, Senior Officials, civil society organisations, and partner agencies to discuss critical issues in advancing women's empowerment and gender equality, and to contribute to Commonwealth and global agenda-setting processes.

Venues and Dates

- **1st WAMM**: Nairobi, Kenya (July 1985), held on the eve of the Third World Conference on Women;
- **2nd WAMM**: Harare, Zimbabwe (1987);
- **3rd WAMM**: Ottawa, Canada (October 1990);
- **4th WAMM**: Nicosia, Cyprus (July 1993);
- **Extraordinary WAMM**: Beijing, China (September 2005), held on the eve of the Fourth World Conference on Women where the Beijing Platform for Action was agreed;
- **5th WAMM**: Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago (November 1996);
- **6th WAMM**: New Delhi, India (April 2000);
- **7th WAMM**: Nadi, Fiji Islands (June 2004).

Some WAMM Highlights

3rd WAMM (Ottawa, 1990):

- Ministers issued the Ottawa Declaration on Women and Structural Adjustment, based on the Commonwealth Expert Group's Report on Engendering Adjustment for the 1990s. The Expert Group report was influential in raising global awareness on the negative impacts of structural adjustment policies on women;
- The Ottawa Declaration was presented at CHOGM in 1991, and annexed in the Harare Communiqué. The Harare Declaration, which sets out the Commonwealth's guiding principles, includes "equality for women, so they may exercise their full and equal rights".

Extraordinary WAMM (Beijing, 1995):

- Chief Emeka Anyaoku, Commonwealth Secretary-General, presented the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development to the United Nations;
- The 1995 PoA represented a break from the women in development to the gender mainstreaming approach, and introduced the Commonwealth's Gender Management System;
- The 1995 PoA was subsequently endorsed by Heads of Government at CHOGM held in Auckland in 1995.

5 WAMM (Trinidad & Tobago, 1996):

- Ministers set the Commonwealth's target of 30% of women in decision-making in the political, public and private sectors by 2005; and
- Introduced the Commonwealth's initiative on gender-responsive budgets, as a strategy for advancing gender equality and eradicating poverty through the national budgetary process. Since then some 50 countries globally are engaged in gender-responsive budgeting, including 25 Commonwealth countries.

7WAMM (Fiji Islands, 2004):

- Ministers discussed and agreed the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015, which was subsequently presented to the Beijing+10 Global Review held at the UN in 2005, and endorsed by Heads of Government at CHOGM held in Malta in 2005;
- The 2005-2015 PoA represents the only Plan of Action developed by an intergovernmental organisation at the close of the post-Beijing+10 decade;
- 7WAMM set a new standard for civil society participation.