

Tenth Meeting of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment 28 March 2004, Jeju, Republic of Korea

SUMMARY RECORD¹

1. The tenth meeting of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment was held at the International Convention Centre (ICC), Jeju, Republic of Korea, on 28 March 2004 from 10am to 12pm. It was attended by Ministers and Senior Officials from 11 countries², and chaired by New Zealand's Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Marian Hobbs, M.P. (a list of participants is at Annex III).

Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Opening Remarks

2. The meeting was opened by Dr Indrajit Coomaraswamy, Director, Economic Affairs Division, Commonwealth Secretariat, who made some introductory remarks (provided at Annex VI) before giving the floor to the Chair. The opening remarks of the Chair are provided at Annex IV.

Agenda Item 2: Adoption of the Agenda

3. The meeting adopted the provisional agenda CCGE(04)2(Admin) of February 2004 with no amendments.

Agenda Item 3: Implementing Partnerships in the Areas of Human Settlements, Water, Sanitation and Waste Management

4. The **Representative of the UK** outlined elements that had made its Partnership for Water and Sanitation in developing countries effective: full involvement of the country concerned; involvement of the private sector; and involvement of NGOs and other groups such as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and trade unions. The focus on building organisational capacity had been perhaps the most important element. He noted that the partnership had been effective in delivering on priorities and had avoided a simple focus on public/private engagement in the sector.

5. Ministers examined the issue of data collection. The **Chief Executive of Homeless International** said that there were a number of examples of community/municipal partnership in which the urban poor had been organised to collect their own data and that this data had subsequently been used at the negotiating table. This 'enumeration' process involved communities in making their own shack counts, drawing maps of their settlements, and identifying how many toilets existed per person and of what type these were. She noted that confidence in the approaches grew as people, who could often not read or write, used them and saw their value. Such approaches had allowed for major resettlement of communities of 20-30,000 people, something which could be politically difficult to achieve, but can be successfully accomplished with the use of such data. Asked about the application of these techniques in sparsely populated areas, Ms McLeod noted that urban groups that had

¹ Approved by the eleventh session of the CCGE in New York on 19 April 2005.

² Australia, Cameroon, Canada, Lesotho, Malaysia, Mauritius, New Zealand, Swaziland, Tonga, United Kingdom, Zambia.

built their own capacities in data collection were beginning to help rural groups to do the same, for example in Namibia and Thailand.

6. The **Representative of Lesotho** highlighted the challenge that some governments face in providing services in remote and mountainous areas, yet such groups may be reluctant to resettle to more populated areas.

7. The **Representative of Canada** noted that once the hurdles of data collection had been addressed, it was important that a broader, integrated, picture could be developed from that data that could then be fed back to people. She noted the valuable role that UNEP's GEMS system was playing in this regard and urged countries to actively participate in the GEMS Water programme.

8. The **Representative of ComHabitat/Commonwealth Foundation** said that the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment had been set up to assist Commonwealth governments in implementing the Habitat Agenda and that it provided an opportunity for all kinds of different groups to work together towards this aim. He saw a strong potential for fruitful discussion between Ministers with responsibilities for environmental issues and human settlements.

9. The **Representative of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)** noted that data was being dealt with on a sectoral basis, and that data collection was often an early casualty of budget cuts. In response to a dearth of data in the Pacific, countries in the region had initiated a project that involved provincial-level examination of blocks of data that could be used. He noted that communities needed to feel safe about the use of the data that was collected and needed to have ownership of the problems that were being addressed. The Pacific had launched a Type II Partnership for sustainable communities that drew on these approaches.

10. The **Representative of Swaziland** called for partnerships to be strengthened at all levels, noting that local communities should have responsibility for keeping data up to date. The **Representative of Homeless International** noted that data collection should start with the priorities of the communities themselves, so that people can see how data collection will help them. Such approaches could help to build capacity and create a network for data collection that is an embedded system to facilitate planning and programme implementation over time. She highlighted the value of sharing of best practice through mechanisms to enable partnership groups to see for themselves the solutions that others have implemented.

11. The **Representative of Tonga** noted that while national data collection often relied on a census carried out every ten years, partnerships create momentum for data collection on human settlements, water, sanitation and waste. He noted that strong partnerships were needed to support effective data gathering – that is, partnerships that involve not just governments but other players too, such as villages, water boards and city authorities. There was also a concern that while data was available, it was not being generated automatically.

12. The **Representative of Australia** spoke about partnerships that the government was involved in. These included the Water Watch partnership, in which local communities had been provided with basic kits for assessing water quality, as well as partnerships with business and local communities. A development partnership in Samoa was focusing on

institutional strengthening of the water authority. It included the Chamber of Commerce in Samoa and other community groups in the introduction of a water charge.

13. The **Representative of Mauritius** said that in his country there had been little interest in partnerships. Where these had been implemented, they tended to be government-to-private sector only. There had been few partnerships with local communities. Mauritius had been successful in generating data automatically through mechanisms such as construction permits, and PRSPs had helped to promote the provision of housing, water and sanitation to the poorest groups. The Representative of Mauritius noted that some effort may be needed to create awareness on the benefits of partnerships in countries with a history of welfare provision.

14. The **Chair** shared her experience of partnership with the dairy industry in New Zealand, which had succeeded in promoting environmentally-sound practices through voluntary initiatives, ahead of regulation by the government.

15. With respect to barriers that governments had experienced with implementing partnerships, the **Representative of Tonga** said that while Tonga's experiences with bilateral partnerships in the areas of water (with New Zealand and with France/EU) and waste management (with Australia), had been good, a general concern was the slow pace at which some international projects were implemented.

16. The experience of the **Representative of Lesotho** was that bilateral partnerships worked well, but that multilateral partnerships were more problematic. Closer co-operation between multilateral and bilateral donors was needed to ensure they were working in harmony towards national goals and priorities and that they did not pursue contradictory policies. For example, Lesotho was being urged by the World Bank to privatise water provision at a time when three-quarters of the people had no service.

17. The **Representative of the United Kingdom** highlighted concerns about the underpricing of water services to network users and high-income areas, while resources were needed to deliver water services to all. The **Representative of Homeless International** noted that there was a need for effective strategies for cross-subsidy.

18. The **Representative of Canada** said that because environmental issues were very 'horizontal' in nature, efforts were needed in the early stages of a partnership to ensure that the right groups were engaged and that they were fully committed. Such efforts took time and might be one cause of slow progress with some partnerships; they were, however, important for long-term success. The **Representative of Canada** suggested that water issues needed to be identified in PRSPs if they were to be resolved fully. With this in mind, Canada had prioritised capacity assistance to include water in PRSPs.

19. The **Representative of Zambia** noted that partnership with NGOs and trade unions could sometimes be difficult. He also highlighted the problems that some governments had experienced in accessing multilateral funding, since they had been unable to provide the necessary counterpart funding to ensure its release. Ministers noted that the untied aid in the form of direct budget support that a number of Commonwealth donors were now providing, could be helpful here.

20. The **Representative of the Commonwealth Secretariat** noted that several Commonwealth countries were not on target to meet a number of the Millennium Development Goals, including that on water. In this respect, there was recognition that the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer's proposal for an International Finance Facility could be useful in meeting funding gaps identified by the World Bank and others. He said that the real message appeared to be that the successful partnerships were strong partnerships that involve the sharing of resources and decision-making. The **Chair** highlighted the need to recognise the demands that partnership can place on people and communities in their daily lives, giving an example of a community partnership in Solomon Islands.

Agenda Item 4: *Commonwealth Priority Concerns for the International Meeting on the Barbados Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States*

21. **Janet Strachan** introduced paper CCGE(04) on 'Commonwealth Support to the Review of the Barbados Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States'. She reported to Ministers on work that the Secretariat had implemented since their discussions in Nairobi in February 2003. This had included: support for multistakeholder processes in five countries to complete National Assessment Reports for the review; close collaboration the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the Intergovernmental Organisations of SIDS (Caricom, Indian Ocean Commission and the South Pacific Forum and CROP agencies) to facilitate inter-regional consultations on issues for the review; the provision of a Senior Policy Adviser within the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme to support the BPoA review process; consideration of a similar request from the Indian Ocean Commission; and advocacy and high-level political consultations on the review and IM, including by the Ministerial Group on Small States and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Abuja.

22. In considering the draft statement proposed by the Chair on Priority Commonwealth Concerns for the IM, the **Representative of Mauritius** thanked the Chair for the work that the Government of New Zealand had undertaken in preparing a draft statement for the consideration of Ministers. He also noted the support voiced by CHOGM for the International Meeting. He said that the IM was not a meeting *of* SIDS, but *on* SIDS, and in this context welcomed the participation of all Commonwealth countries. Having given preliminary comments on an early draft of the Chair's proposed text, the Representative of Mauritius suggested three further amendments, to include the following in the draft text:

- 'they need to address the adverse impacts of natural disasters' in paragraph 2.
- 'they need dedicated policy spaces so that they can better integrate into the multilateral trading system' and paragraph 3.
- 'they need assistance to meet their obligations towards implementing the International Maritime Security Regime and the UN Security Council Resolution 1373' in paragraph 3
- 'they need assistance from developed countries to establish, develop and have facilitated access to appropriate technology that can be used to improve food production systems' and paragraph 3; and
- 'they need assistance to develop and/or implement renewable energy programmes' in paragraph 3.

23. The **Representative of Tonga**, supported by the **Representative of Mauritius**, suggested the inclusion of 'rising sea levels' in paragraph 3.
24. The **Representative of the UK** emphasised that a key concern was the capacity of SIDS to participate in the multilateral trading environment.
25. The **Representative of Australia** called for the Preparatory Committee session for the IM to focus on implementation of the existing BPOA, rather than any new plans of action. The focus on implementation included identification of gaps and how these could be addressed. The better involvement of SIDS within UNDESA was also an issue of concern.
26. The **Representative of Canada** sought clarification on the term 'policy spaces'. In response, the **Representative of Mauritius** noted that SIDS had limited capacity to address accession to the WTO and adopt policies domestically. They also experienced constraints in their participation in Geneva. SIDS needed the necessary infrastructural capacity and facilities to be able **to participate fully in the WTO**. The **Representative of the Commonwealth Secretariat** said that small states experienced endowed handicaps, which contributed to a higher unit cost of doing business, which had historically been compensated for through trade preferences. Erosion of these preferences made it increasingly difficult for small states to remain competitive and they needed policy space to enable them to adjust.
27. The **Representative of Zambia** noted that other countries were still experiencing barriers to trade, including subsidies. The **Representative of the Commonwealth Secretariat** agreed that these were important matters to consider, but that the particular concern expressed in the wording proposed by Mauritius was the need for longer transition periods and flexibility on trade rules.
28. The **Representative of Tonga** said that SIDS had no economies of scale that they could draw upon. Furthermore, they relied on import duties, rather than income tax, to raise revenue. The revenue loss associated with trade liberalisation was therefore, a major problem for these countries.
29. The **Representative of Lesotho** noted that as a land-locked small state it experienced similar problems to SIDS, such as dumping and the loss of skilled workers. What is agreed for SIDS may also be applicable to other small states in addressing their vulnerabilities.
30. The **Representative of the United Kingdom** noted that the Commonwealth group was useful in that it contained different negotiating groups and over half the members were small states. It was a forum through which the concerns of these different members could be taken up and considered in a wider perspective.
31. The **Representative of SPREP** expressed that organisation's appreciation for the support that the Commonwealth Secretariat, Australia and New Zealand had provided in the BPOA review process. Much support was still required, for example in the completion of National Sustainable Development Strategies and in further preparations for the IM. One area that required further attention was the engagement of civil society in the process. Others included data for sustainable development, integrated decision making, and nurturing capacity through human resources development.

32. The **Representative of Mauritius** read a statement by the Minister of Environment (provided as Annex V) and urged Commonwealth member states to participate fully in the IM at Head of Government level. The Representative of Mauritius expressed his appreciation for the Commonwealth's support on preparations for the IM and commended the Commonwealth Secretariat for its collaboration with regional organisations on preparations for the review. The Representative of Mauritius also recorded his appreciation to the Government of India for the graceful gift of the conference centre at which the IM will be held.

33. The **Chair** thanked delegates for their inputs. She undertook to work on the text and circulate it in due course. Consultations on the *Statement by Commonwealth Environment Ministers on the Mauritius International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action on Small Island Developing States* continued in Jeju and through correspondence with member states. The final statement is provided at Annex II. This was circulated to Ministers under cover of circular letter number 18/2004 of 3 September 2004.

Agenda Item 5: Any Other Business

Arrangements for CCGE-11

34. Ministers agreed to meet again immediately before the 23rd Special Session of the Governing Council of UNEP/Global Environment Ministers Forum in 2005.

Selection of the Chair for CCGE-11

35. Ministers noted that consultations to identify a Chair for CCGE-11 had not been completed, and asked the Secretariat to continue these efforts, giving due consideration to rotation between geographical regions, size (small, medium, large states), and type of economy (developed/developing).

Close of the Meeting

36. The Chair brought the meeting to a close, thanking representatives for their contributions, and undertaking to prepare and circulate a Summary Statement of the discussions the next day (this is provided as Annex I). The **Representative of Canada** offered a vote of thanks to the Chair on behalf of the CCGE for her excellent work in conducting the Group's discussions.

Summary Statement by the Chair

Commonwealth Environment Ministers and Senior Officials met on 28 March 2004 for the tenth session of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment (CCGE). The meeting was convened to coincide with the Eighth Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Environment Ministers Forum held in Jeju, Republic of Korea. The CCGE was chaired by New Zealand's Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Marian Hobbs, M.P.

Ministers focused their discussion on the effectiveness of partnerships in the areas of human settlements, water, sanitation and waste management, as well as priority concerns for the International Meeting (IM) to Review the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA) on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

In sharing their experiences of partnerships, Ministers focused on three areas: data collection; water quality and provision; and arrangements for bilateral and multilateral support. Ministers recognised the valuable role that community/municipality partnerships can play in enabling the poorest communities to collect data about their own settlements and services. Such approaches have helped some authorities to plan and implement services and major resettlement programmes with the co-operation of the communities concerned. They can also help to build a network for data collection as an embedded system to facilitate planning and programme implementation. Delegates spoke about the need for communities to take responsibility for data collection in a spirit of partnership with government, but also for communities to feel confident about the ways in which data will be used, stressing that data collection should start with the priorities of the communities themselves, so that people can see how data collection will help them. The sharing of best practice could be valuable, enabling partnership groups to see for themselves how others have approached issues. Other delegates noted the role that partnerships have played in creating momentum for data collection and a more integrated, rather than sectoral, approach to data based around planning for sustainable development. Ministers noted that there were challenges associated with data collection in remote and rural areas, and that some governments face particular concerns in providing services to communities in remote and mountainous areas.

Ministers recognised that since water and sanitation concerns involve many different sectors and stakeholders, a partnership approach in these areas can be particularly useful. There was also a potential for fruitful discussion between Ministers with responsibilities for environmental issues and human settlements. While some outlined the role that communities were playing in assessing and monitoring water quality, other partnership examples included the strengthening of water authorities and participation in UNEP's GEMS Water programme, to help to ensure that a broader picture was built up from water data, which could then be fed back to communities. One delegate noted that PRSPs had been useful in generating basic services for the poorest groups; another urged that water be identified in PRSPs to ensure that this concern was effectively addressed. Ministers also discussed water pricing, noting that this was an important and complex area. Aspects included the demands of multilateral agencies to introduce water pricing when large sectors of the population still had no service provision, and concerns about the under-pricing of water services to network users and high-income areas, while resources were needed to deliver water services to all. This matter included the need for effective strategies for cross-subsidy. It was noted that several

Commonwealth countries were not on target to meet a number of the Millennium Development Goals, including that on water. In this respect, there was recognition that the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer's proposal for an International Finance Facility could be useful in meeting funding gaps identified by the World Bank and others.

With respect to international partnerships, delegates raised the need for closer co-operation between multilateral and bilateral donors to ensure they were working in harmony towards national goals and priorities and that they did not pursue contradictory policies. Ministers noted that some governments had experienced problems in accessing multilateral funding, since they had been unable to provide the necessary counterpart funding to ensure its release. Untied aid in the form of direct budget support that a number of Commonwealth donors were now providing could be helpful here. Another concern was the slow pace at which some international projects were implemented, due to the lack of harmonisation in donor procedures, which placed an onerous burden on capacity-constrained countries. Ministers welcomed the efforts being made to address this problem.

In general terms, delegates noted that there was a potential for innovative partnerships, especially those involving communities directly. The most successful partnerships appeared to be strong partnerships that involve the sharing of resources and decision-making. There was a need to recognise the demands that partnership can place on people and communities in their daily lives and some effort may be needed to create awareness on the benefits of partnerships in countries with a history of welfare provision.

Ministers reviewed Commonwealth priority concerns for the International Meeting (IM) to Review the Barbados Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and discussed elements of a possible joint statement for presentation to the 12th session of the Commission for Sustainable Development. Ministers noted new challenges that have emerged for SIDS, including security concerns, and the need to address the adverse impacts of natural disasters, as well as those of climate change and sea level rise. One minister emphasised the need to build the capacity of SIDS to participate in the multilateral trading system and to ensure a supportive international environment. Another delegate called for dedicated policy spaces to be provided so that SIDS may better integrate into the multilateral trading system. Ministers noted that what is agreed for SIDS may also be applicable to other small states in addressing their vulnerabilities.

Ministers urged a renewed partnership between SIDS and the international community to foster their sustainable development. They encouraged participation at the IM at Head of Government level. Delegates sought a focus on implementation of the BPoA and highlighted the need for financial support to facilitate the participation of SIDS in the forthcoming Preparatory Committee meeting and the IM itself.

Ministers appreciated the Commonwealth's support for preparations for the IM, which included support for integrated national assessments of BPoA implementation in five member states. They also commended the Commonwealth Secretariat for its collaboration with regional organisations on preparations for the review.

Ministers agreed to meet again in conjunction with the 23rd Session of the Governing Council of UNEP/Global Environment Ministers Forum to be held in Nairobi, Kenya in 2005. They

asked the Secretariat to continue on-going consultations to identify a Chair for the next session.

Jeju, Republic of Korea
29 March 2004

Island Issues are Commonwealth Issues

Statement on the 2004 International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action on Small Island Developing States, Mauritius

by the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment

Commonwealth Ministers of Environment look forward to positive outcomes from the International Meeting on Small Island Developing States, to be hosted by Commonwealth member state Mauritius from 30 August to 3 September 2004.

Small Island Developing States make up a significant proportion of Commonwealth members: SIDS issues are therefore Commonwealth issues. Ministers reaffirmed the conclusions of the Sixth Meeting of the Commonwealth Ministerial Group on Small States in Abuja, Nigeria, held on 4 December 2003, which confirmed support for the Barbados Programme of Action and noted efforts made at national level towards its implementation. Ministers noted new challenges to have emerged for SIDS including security concerns in all their aspects and the emergence of highly communicable and vector-borne diseases, such as SARS and HIV/AIDS. They were also mindful of enduring issues for SIDS including the need to address the adverse impacts of climate change and sea level rise, as well those of natural disasters, and to better enable SIDS to participate in and benefit from the global trading system.

Commonwealth Ministers of the Environment consider the International Meeting represents an important opportunity to assess the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, to identify successes, and to focus attention on areas where implementation has fallen short of what is needed. SIDS remain amongst the most vulnerable countries on the planet. They require ongoing support from donors to build capacity and resilience. In addition to the capacity to participate effectively in the multilateral trading system, SIDS need a supportive international environment involving efforts by all WTO members to enable them to better integrate into the multilateral trading system. They need effective action by all members of the international community to address climate change. They need to have sound and transparent governance to create an enabling environment for poverty eradication and sustainable development. They need enhanced foreign direct investment and effective partnership with appropriate actors of the international community in order to achieve the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals.

Ministers noted the call by SIDS for assistance to: meet their obligations towards implementing the International Maritime Security Regime and the UN Security Council Resolution 1373; establish, develop and have facilitated access to appropriate technology that can be used to improve food production systems; and develop and/or implement renewable energy programmes.

The International Meeting can contribute substantially to these outcomes by encouraging renewed focus on SIDS' issues, and renewed partnership between SIDS and the international community to foster their sustainable development. Ministers:

- encourage delegations to the preparatory meeting during the 12th Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development from 14-16 April to ensure the draft Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action fully reflects the issues above and focuses clearly on priorities for further implementation of the BPOA;
- undertake to promote to their international development colleagues the desirability of supporting SIDS in their development of National Sustainable Development Strategies by 2005 (as agreed in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation).
- undertake to urge their respective Governments to support and participate fully in the International Meeting on Small Island Developing States to be held in Mauritius, and that representation and participation at the International Meeting be at the highest possible level.

LIST OF DELEGATION

AUSTRALIA

Ms Kerry SMITH
*Director, International Multilateral Unit
Department of the Environment and Heritage*

CAMEROON

Chief TANYI-MBIANYOR CLARKSON
Minister of Environment and Forestry

Mrs Monique OULI NDONGO
*Chief of Division Programs and Sustainable Development
Ministry of Environment and Forestry*

Mbassi MENYE
*Head of Programme Unit
Ministry of Environment and Forestry*

CANADA

Ms Norine SMITH
*Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy and Communications
Environment Canada*

Mr Gary PRINGLE
*Deputy Director, Environment and Sustainable Development
Department of Foreign Affairs*

Ms Catherine COLEMEN
*Officer (Water)
Environment Canada*

LESOTHO

Hon Lebohang NTSINYI
*Minister
Ministry for Tourism, Environment and Culture*

Mr J T METSINS
*Principle Secretary
Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture*

Mrs Nthabisens MAJARA
*Principal Land Use Planner, Department of Environment
Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture*

MALAYSIA

Mr Zulkifli IDRIS
*Deputy Secretary General (Policy)
Science, Technology and Environment*

Mr Himmat SINGH
*Director, Economic Planning Unit
Prime Minister's Department*

Mr Letchumanan RAMETHA
*Principal Assistant Director
Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment*

Dr Shamsuddin LATIF
*Deputy Director General
Department of Environment*

Mr Azrul ANAZ MOHD ANY
*Assistant Secretary
Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

MAURITIUS

Mr Sateaved SEEBALUCK
*Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit*

Mr Hemansing PRAYAG
*Director
Department of Environment*

NEW ZEALAND

Hon Marian HOBBS
*Minister
Ministry for the Environment*

Ms Catherine NICOL
*Policy Analyst
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade*

SWAZILAND

Hon Thandi SHONGWE

Minister

Ministry of Environment

Mr Jameson VILAKATI

Director

Environment Authority

Princess GCEBILE DLAMINI

Under Secretary

Ministry of Environment

TONGA

Hon James Cecil COCKER

Minister of Environment

Department of Environment

Mr Uilou SAMANI

Director of Environment

Department of Environment

UNITED KINGDOM

Hon Elliot MORLEY, MP

Minister of State for Environment & Agri-Environment

Mr Roy HATHAWAY

Head, International Sustainable Development

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Miss Demelza NORTH

International Sustainable Development Governance Policy Officer

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Mr Liam McALEESE

Assistant Private Secretary to Hon Elliot Morley

ZAMBIA

Hon. Patrick KALIFUNGWA

Minister

Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Natural Resources

COMHABITAT

Dr Peter de GROOT

ComHabitat/Commonwealth Foundation

Ms Ruth McLEOD
Chief Executive
Homeless International

SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Mr Matt McINTYRE
Adviser, Acting Coordinator, Sustainable Economic Development

COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT

Dr Indrajit COOMARASWAMY
Director
Economic Affairs Division

Ms Janet STRACHAN
Chief Programme Officer (Sustainable Development)
Economic Affairs Division

**Opening Remarks by Hon Marian Hobbs, M.P.
Minister for the Environment, New Zealand**

I was delighted to be asked to take up the role of chairing the CCGE this year, because I always look forward to the opportunity to meet with you, my distinguished colleagues, in what I regard as an informal “Commonwealth caucus” of sorts before the UNEP GMEF takes place. I’m sure a great many of you would share my belief in the enduring value of the Commonwealth as a way of bringing together developed and developing countries in the pursuit of shared objectives.

The question of partnerships in the area of water, waste and sanitation is one that is of broad relevance to a great number of us. So too are the preparations now underway for the International Meeting on the Barbados Programme of Action later this year.

I’m very interested to hear your various perspectives on these important issues. But before we begin our discussions, I should like to propose that, if there are no objections, the provisional agenda be adopted.

Does anyone have anything to add under “any other business”? Under that category we will also discuss the date and venue of our next meeting, including views on possible agenda items, and elect the Chair for the next session.

I think one of the main values of this meeting is its informality – and I encourage you to continue in the free and frank spirit of debate that has characterised past CCGE meetings. I will be putting together a short summary statement of our deliberations after the meeting, which I will endeavour to get to you by tomorrow afternoon. A more comprehensive record of today’s discussion will be prepared by the admirable Environment team at the Commonwealth Secretariat and circulated later.

Can I propose that in the time we have left to us today we spend about 50 minutes on our discussion of agenda item 3, and 40 minutes for item 4. That should leave us about 10 minutes for any other business.

In view of the very limited time we have available to us, can I urge you to keep your interventions brief – no more than five minutes – to enable all who wish to speak on any item to do so.

In that spirit, let’s turn our thoughts to Agenda Item 3: Effective Partnerships in the areas of Human Settlements, Water, Sanitation and Waste Management.

As we all know, human settlements, water, sanitation and waste management will be the focus of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development during its 2004/05 cycle, as well as this year’s UNEP GMEF, which will examine the environmental aspects of meeting agreed goals in these areas.

Many low and middle-income Commonwealth countries lack adequate provision for water, sanitation and waste management. These are problems we cannot hope to resolve in

isolation, but only through working together and sharing our experiences and our own, domestic approaches.

The concept of partnership is at the heart of New Zealand's sustainable development approach. Our government recognises that it cannot achieve sustainable development on its own. Government can provide the wheels, but civil society must be the engine. Partnerships mean combined efforts and resources, shared understanding and information, and ultimately make for better results.

I would like to call on Dr Peter de Groot of ComHabitat to introduce the excellent paper he has prepared to shape our deliberations today.

I'd like to suggest that we now devote around a quarter of an hour to each of the three questions posed in paragraph 7 of Dr de Groot's background paper, beginning with the first:

1. What are Ministers' experiences with partnerships in the areas of water, sanitation, waste management and human settlements? What has worked best in meeting national and international objectives? Which have been the most successful partnerships in creating services for the poor? What does it take to nurture their development (in terms of policies, resources, and stakeholder facilitation?)
2. What will it take for successful partnerships to be scaled-up? Is there potential for regional partnerships? What is the role of external agencies, both multilateral and bilateral? What role could ComHabitat play?
3. What are Ministers' concerns for the GMEF/GCSS and the UN Commission for Sustainable Development? What are their priority concerns in: (a) addressing the environmental dimensions of water, sanitation and waste management concerns, and (b) meeting international agreed commitments on water, sanitation, waste management and human settlements? Is there a role for the Commonwealth in promoting an effective dialogue on these concerns at the CSD?

Can I propose that we now move on to discuss Preparations for the Mauritius International Meeting on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

CCGE-10 provides a timely opportunity – in advance of the Preparatory Committee meeting (14-16 April, New York) for the Mauritius Meeting (30 August-3 September) – to raise issues of concern on the review and to advocate for outcomes leading to measures that enable Small Island Developing States to achieve sustainable development.

I'd like to begin our discussion of the Commonwealth's paper by inviting Janet Strachan to tell us about the official process to date, and the Secretariat's role in recent preparatory meetings.

Again, I'd like to propose breaking our discussion down into smaller sections reflecting the three questions posed of us in the Secretariat's paper.

1. What outcomes are Commonwealth members seeking from the International Meeting?
2. What priority areas should be raised for consideration by the International Meeting to address: outstanding concerns on implementation of the Barbados Plan of Action (BPOA); and new and emerging issues related to the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States?
3. Are there further ways in which the Commonwealth can provide support to SIDS in the preparations and the International Meeting?

Changes to /comment on draft Commonwealth Environment Ministers' statement on this topic?

Which brings us to agenda item 5 – any other business.

1. Date and venue of the next meeting of the CCGE. Can I suggest that we meet again the day before next year's GMEF? (The Secretariat has not found that holding the Commonwealth meeting during sessions of another forum is particularly effective.)
2. Election of the Chair for CCGE-11. It is usual practice for the Chair to rotate between geographical regions, also giving consideration to relative size, and type of economy (developed/developing). The decision is usually reached by consensus and the new Chair elected by acclamation.

Thank you all for your constructive and often innovative contributions to our debate today.

**Remarks by the Hon. Rajesh Bhagwan
Minister of Environment, Republic of Mauritius**

**Commonwealth Support to the Review of the Barbados Programme of Action on the
Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States**

Chair,
Colleague Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me first of all express the gratitude and heartfelt thanks of the Republic of Mauritius for having been invited to participate in this forum. Our presence here is a clear signal of our total commitment to take up the challenges that face small islands developing states towards achieving sustainable development in a truly integrated way. Mauritius acknowledges this hard work of the Commonwealth Secretariat which is partnering closely with the AOSIS and other international organizations and regional inter-governmental organizations in the run-up to the International Meeting in August 2004.

Allow me to quote what the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr Kofi Annan said referring to small islands: "What we do with respect to small islands has implications far beyond their troubled shores. By working with small islands on their problems, we can find solutions for ours. Brighter horizons for small islands can mean brighter horizons for the world, in general". But while small islands issues have been attracting global attention and gaining international support, we note with much concern that the successful implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action has been constrained.

When it was recommended at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, that a full and comprehensive review of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action be made, Mauritius seized this key opportunity to reinforce its commitments towards ensuring the sustainable viability of small island developing states and by offering to host this International Meeting.

Though this Ministerial level Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment is the principal Commonwealth forum for building consensus and strengthening cooperation on environmental issues, it is imperative that as small islands developing states, we speak with a unified voice our common challenges and concerns. As a group we share several characteristics, which make us economically, environmentally and socially more vulnerable to factors upon which we exercise little control. These constraints make sustainable development a real challenge for the island states themselves and the international community at large.

We note with much concern that many small islands developing states have not been successful in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, particularly those actions aiming at eradicating poverty, improving the quality of life of the islanders, protecting the environment and conserving natural resources and improving resilience. To achieve these goals, SIDS would require a comprehensive approach and heavy investment of labour, capital, technology and research, all of which are rare in SIDS. Substantial international assistance both technical and financial are much needed to facilitate adjustment to changing macro-

economic conditions at a time when overseas development assistance is being eroded and preferential arrangements are being dismantled.

Chair, Colleagues, we have all recognized that partnerships between government are of key importance to bring countries together with a view to develop strategies to implement many of the commitments made by governments in Johannesburg.

I would request all partners to show their resource commitment with respect to financial, technical assistance, partnership initiatives and information exchange.

Thus it would be most appropriate to enlist the support of the Commonwealth for the review of the International meeting on the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action on the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States as the Commonwealth is a catalyst for global consensus building and a source of assistance for sustainable development. The more so the Commonwealth Secretariat works as a trusted partner with its member governments to promote economic development that is environmentally sound and socially sustainable. Its three-fold approach on environment and sustainable development recognizes that economic, environmental and social policies must work together to improve living standards and the quality of life and promoting constructive dialogue on environment issues of international concern, promoting the concerns of small states and mobilizing networks to facilitate exchange of information and expertise.

I thus invite all Commonwealth Member States to participate fully in the activities of the International Meeting and to provide their respective relevant inputs. I also strongly call for the active participation and support of Commonwealth Member States to ensuring that this Meeting gain global recognizance.

And alongside I would request the Commonwealth Secretariat to network with all member states so that this International Meeting is given due consideration at their respective level.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to conclude with thanks the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment for this initiative and I also wish to place on record the valuable role of the Commonwealth Secretariat role in promoting the International Meeting on the Review of the BPoA on the Sustainable Development of small Island Developing States.

Thank you for your kind attention.

**Opening Remarks by Dr Indrajit Coomaraswamy
Director, Economic Affairs Division, Commonwealth Secretariat**

Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

A warm welcome to the tenth meeting of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment. I would like to extend special greetings to those participating in the work of the CCGE for the first time, and to express my deep appreciation to the Hon Marian Hobbs, M.P., New Zealand's Minister for the Environment, for agreeing to Chair this meeting. She has always been a dynamic, engaged and much valued member of this forum.

I hope that the CCGE will again provide Ministers with the opportunity for an open and informal exchange of views on priority concerns for the UNEP Global Ministerial Environment Forum, the UN Commission on Sustainable Development in April, and the International Meeting to Review the Barbados Programme of Action, which is scheduled to take place in Mauritius in August.

In this regard, we have two substantive items on the Provisional Agenda:

Provisional Agenda Item 3 is the main theme of the meeting. This focuses on effective partnerships in the areas of human settlements, water, sanitation and waste management.

UN-HABITAT, in its recently published analysis, 'The Challenge of Slums', notes that we are facing both rapidly urbanising populations and the urbanisation of poverty. Success in addressing the human settlements agenda will be critical to attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and to meeting the needs of the poorest members of society throughout the Commonwealth.

Let us recognise that slums are vibrant, organic communities that need collaborative programmes of investment if they are to develop sustainably.

They are rich in culture, which bubbles up out of urban poverty. Just think of the role that South Africa's township music has played in that country's history, the fight against apartheid, and its on-going recovery. Culture gives voice to the experiences of the poor and provide opportunities for community involvement, collective expression and employment.

The way in which slum investments are made, is important. Tasks such as pipe laying and maintenance can be carried out by labour-intensive approaches, rather than machine-intensive approaches, that give both employment to slum dwellers and involve them directly in the improvement and maintenance of their own infrastructure.

Local authorities are increasingly unable to keep up with waste management demands. Again, there is a role for slum dwellers in composting and recycling enterprises which provide employment, profit and environmental benefits. Existing informal sector work, such as rag-picking, must be improved, providing protection to workers and creating effective markets for recycled materials.

All of these matters are at the heart of your deliberations today. And let us not underestimate the size of the challenge:

- Over one third of the world's urban population live in slums. In Least Developed Countries this proportion rises to nearly 80 per cent;
- 1.2 billion people are still without access to clean drinking water;
- 2.4 billion people lack access to adequate sanitation; and
- 1.6 billion people – one quarter of the world's population – have no access to electricity.

Perhaps the most concrete and significant Commonwealth initiative in these areas is a partnership known as ComHabitat. It was set up in 1998 to assist Commonwealth countries in implementing the Habitat Agenda through integrated and collaborative approaches involving all levels of governance: central government; local government; civil society and the private sector. The partnership now includes the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Foundation, the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council, the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, the U.K. Department for International Development, and Homeless International. At its inaugural Meeting in Nairobi in May 1999, ComHabitat adopted the following Commonwealth goal:

to demonstrate progress towards adequate shelter for all with secure tenure and access to essential services in every community by 2015

This contributes directly to the Millennium Development Goal of:

achieving by 2020, a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.

Shelter, water and sanitation, energy and poverty eradication are the big issues for sustainable development. While progress on implementing the Habitat Agenda has been disappointing in some respects, governments have recognised the potential of working in partnership with other groups to fulfil their obligations.

We look forward to hearing today about Ministers' own experiences with effective partnerships. What works best; how good examples be scaling up; and how partners organisations including the Commonwealth support the development and exchange of best practice.

The second substantive issue is addressed under Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda, when Ministers may wish to agree a Commonwealth statement of priority concerns for the International Meeting on the 1994 Barbados Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The Commonwealth has a strong interest in this review because it concerns over half our member states. The Secretariat has been actively involved in the preparatory process, working closely with the inter-regional organisations of small states as well as the Alliance of Small Island Developing States, and I look forward to hearing how this assistance can be further strengthened.

I look forward to a constructive dialogue on all of these matters. And so, it is with pleasure that I now give the floor to your Chair, Hon Marian Hobbs.

Thank-you