



Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs

Beijing +10 Meeting, New York, 27 February 2005

COMMONWEALTH WOMEN'S AFFAIRS MINISTERS' MESSAGE TO HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING, MALTA 2005

1. We, the Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs, meeting in New York on 27 February 2005, reiterate our strong resolve to promote women's rights and gender equality. We reaffirm our collective commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), adopted by governments globally and endorsed by Commonwealth Heads of Government in their Aso Rock Declaration 2003 at Abuja, Nigeria.
2. The new Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 reflects Commonwealth principles and values. It supports work towards women's empowerment (endorsed by Heads of Government in Harare 1991 and Coolum 2002) and the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and the Beijing+5 Outcome Document of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly.
3. The PoA provides the framework within which the Commonwealth will advance its commitment to women's rights, gender equality and equity. It is firmly grounded in partnership as the most effective way of working towards gender equality in the context of the Commonwealth's comparative advantage. The PoA is part of the Commonwealth's contribution to the Beijing+10 Review.
4. In the true spirit and Commonwealth tradition of shared values, diversities, consensus-building, collective responsibility and one Commonwealth voice, we, the Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers, present the DENARAU STATEMENT adopted in 2004 in the Fiji Islands, for endorsement by Commonwealth Heads of Government.
5. In recognition of what has been resolved by the Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs, we now convey to Heads of Government the need to accelerate implementation of the PoA, the Beijing+10 Declaration, the MDGs and other frameworks – in particular, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325) – to advance the achievement of women's rights and gender equality in member states and globally.



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Seventh Meeting, Nadi, Fiji Islands, 30 May-2 June 2004

DENARAU STATEMENT

RECALLING that gender equality is one of the fundamental principles of the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) Harare Declaration of 1991;

FORTY-THREE Commonwealth countries attended this historic meeting in Denarau, Nadi, Fiji Islands, on 31 May to 2 June 2004, that approved the new Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PoA);

BEING THE FIRST ever Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting to be held in the Pacific region, the Pacific Commonwealth members in particular, welcomed the holding of 7WAMM in their region, and called for the Commonwealth to strengthen its activities in addressing the special needs and vulnerabilities of small island developing states;

IN A LANDMARK DECISION, the Ministers agreed on civil society participation in 7WAMM and future WAMM meetings;

NOTING THE ACHIEVEMENTS of 53 member countries:

- Forty-five countries have developed national action plans on gender;
- Forty-nine have ratified CEDAW although only 14 have signed the Optional Protocol;
- Eleven have instituted constitutional or legislative reforms that address gender concerns such as land, property, citizenship, employment, family and spousal rights;
- Three countries have exceeded the 30 per cent target of women's representation in parliament;

REFLECTING UPON these achievements, Ministers agreed on the need to accelerate implementation of domestic plans and accession to international instruments and address emerging challenges related to gender, democracy, peace, conflict, human security, human rights and the law, globalisation, poverty eradication, economic empowerment and the HIV/AIDS pandemic;

RECOGNISING THE NEED for a long term perspective, Ministers adopted the PoA to advance their commitment to gender equality and equity. The PoA will guide Commonwealth action for the 2005-2015 decade with a mid-term review in 2010 and update as necessary;

Partnerships were stressed at all levels: between and within Commonwealth governments, civil society, parliamentarians, magistrates, judges, lawyers, the private sector and multi- and bilateral agencies. Partnerships with men and boys were felt to be critical, as are changing attitudes and behaviours, particularly around conflict, gender-based violence, education, health and HIV/AIDS;

HAVING IDENTIFIED four critical areas of focus, Ministers called upon governments and the Commonwealth Secretariat to take the necessary action for the effective implementation of the Plan of Action;

OF PARTICULAR CONCERN is the need for adequate financial, human and technical resources to implement the PoA. The Commonwealth Secretariat is encouraged to continue and strengthen its engagement with governments, CSOs, parliamentarians, Commonwealth associations, international financial institutions and donor partners, to ensure that where possible priority is given to allocating resources to support the implementation of the PoA at the national level;

HEADS OF GOVERNMENT ARE CALLED UPON TO ALLOCATE THE REQUIRED RESOURCES FOR THE FULL AND EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMONWEALTH PLAN OF ACTION FOR GENDER EQUALITY 2005–2015.