

**Statement on Behalf of the
Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements**

*Delivered to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development by
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of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements*

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Chair, Heads of Delegations, Distinguished Delegates,

- I recently had the pleasure of chairing the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements, which was held on 6th April in the wings of the 20th Session of the Governing Council of UN Habitat in Nairobi.
- The CCGHS is a Commonwealth initiative to assist member countries to implement the Habitat Agenda and to attain the Millennium Development Goals.
- At its last session in Nairobi, the Group discussed the priorities it would like to see addressed by this session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and the forthcoming review of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. The members asked me to convey key points of their deliberations.
- Firstly, we recognised that shelter is the foundation of human dignity and that housing and human settlements development is about building people's lives. There can be no sustainable development without sustainable urbanisation. Adequate shelter, with secure tenure and access to essential services, is deeply connected to achievement of the millennium development goals, including those on poverty, education, health, water and sanitation. Something like one in six people live in what amounts to health- and life-threatening environments. In order to make progress, we need an integrated, holistic, debate on these issues

that puts human settlements at the very heart of the development agenda;

- Secondly, the members recognised that financing is an important concern in implementing international goals. In this context, they recognised that debt was a significant issue, and a major burden, for least developed countries, since the servicing of debt takes a great deal of resources that could otherwise be directed towards placing these countries on a higher growth trajectory and thereby assisting them to achieve the MDGs. It is important that all HIPC countries receive up to 100 per cent multilateral debt relief after they reach completion point and for the relief to entail additional and predictable long-term financing for the MDGs.
- The Commonwealth Consultative Group on the Human Settlements, was of the considered view that Governments should focus on these concerns in their deliberations this week, and in their preparations for the review of Millennium Development Goals later in the year.

Thank you.