

Report of the Commonwealth Beijing+10 Meeting of Women's Affairs Ministers

27 February 2005

New York

Millennium UN Plaza Hotel



Commonwealth Secretariat

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Executive Summary

The Commonwealth Beijing+10 Meeting of Women's Affairs Ministers was held in New York on 27 February 2005. Chaired by Hon Adi Asenaca Caucau, Minister for Women, Poverty Alleviation and Social Welfare, the Fiji Islands, it was attended by some 170 participants.

The meeting was intended to identify the priorities and mechanisms for effective implementation of the new Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PoA); to build and strengthen partnerships with governments, Commonwealth associations, multilateral and regional agencies, and civil society organisations (CSOs) for effective implementation of the PoA; to facilitate the articulation of a unified Commonwealth voice in the Beijing+10 Review process at the United Nations; and to send a strong message from Women's Affairs Ministers to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in November 2005 seeking their endorsement of the PoA.

The Keynote Address was given by Ms Rachel Mayanja, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. Ms Mayanja stressed that the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) continued to be a blueprint in all critical areas. She noted, however, that progress in its implementation had been slower than expected, partly due to persistent gaps between policy and practice, and that public attitudes had not changed in tandem with changes to institutional mechanisms. She suggested that the Commonwealth could play a key role in the implementation process.

The new PoA was presented to the meeting by Ms Ann Keeling, Director, Social Transformation Programmes Division (STPD), who outlined the four critical areas on which the Commonwealth will focus its actions to advance gender equality over the next decade: gender, democracy, peace and conflict; gender, human rights and law; gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment; and gender and HIV/AIDS. Delegates indicated their progress in implementing the 1995 Commonwealth PoA and its 2000 update and expressed their commitment to the new framework for advancing gender equality. Two statements were agreed by Ministers: one to the UN Beijing+10 Review and the other to CHOGM 2005.

The meeting was held on the eve of the end-of-decade Beijing+10 Review, the main focus of the 49th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women held from 28 February to 11 March 2005. The Review sought to defend the gains made in the BPfA and ensure that no rolling back occurred. The Commonwealth's presence at the UN meeting was particularly important as it was the only intergovernmental organisation that had developed a new Plan of Action for the 2005-2015 decade. During the review, a number of member governments identified themselves with the new PoA in their national statements, including Antigua and Barbuda, Botswana, Fiji Islands, The Gambia, New Zealand and South Africa. The strong statement on sexual and reproductive health and rights in the PoA was affirmed by the debates in which a number of Commonwealth countries and CSOs were involved, and the successful negotiation of the Beijing+10 Declaration without a proposed US amendment to the effect that the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and Beijing+5 outcome document "do not create new international human rights and do not include the right to abortion".

The Declaration from the UN Beijing+10 Review not only reaffirmed the BPfA and the Beijing+5 outcome document but also pledged to undertake further action to ensure their full and accelerated implementation. In addition, the Declaration emphasised that the full and effective

implementation of the BPfA was essential to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and stressed the need to ensure the integration of a gender perspective in the review of the Millennium Declaration, being held in September 2005. It is now widely recognised that although gender equality and women's empowerment are only specifically identified in the third MDG – with its target of eliminating gender disparity in education at all levels by 2015 – they apply to all of them. Without progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women, none of the MDGs will be achieved.

During the UN Beijing+10 Review, Ms Ann Keeling, Director of the Social Transformation Programmes Division at the Commonwealth Secretariat, presented the new Commonwealth PoA to the High-Level Plenary. Dr Rawwida Baksh represented the Secretariat on the UNDAW high-level panel on the Role of Regional and Intergovernmental Organisations in Promoting Gender Equality.

In taking the new Commonwealth PoA forward, a specially-convened meeting was held on 1 March 2005 of the original members of the Commonwealth Gender Reference Group (CGRG), which had been established at the Meeting of Heads of National Women's Machineries in New York in the wings of the 2003 Commission on the Status of Women. The meeting agreed the composition and Terms of Reference of the new Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group (CGPMG), which were subsequently circulated by the Secretariat to member governments and approved. The meeting also discussed a proposal to establish a Commonwealth Working Group on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on women, peace and security. It was agreed that the Commonwealth Secretariat would prepare a position paper on the Working Group and circulate it to Ministers. If Ministers approved the Working Group, responsibility for establishing it could be given to the Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group.

Coming out of Commonwealth and UN Beijing+10 meetings, the Commonwealth moves forward with the new PoA as a strong framework for advancing gender equality in the decade ahead and with a renewed commitment to achieving full implementation of the BPfA as outlined in the Beijing+10 Declaration.

1. Introduction

This report covers the Commonwealth Beijing+10 Meeting of Women's Affairs Ministers, Senior Officials, Civil Society Organisations and Partners, which was held in New York at the Millennium UN Plaza Hotel on 27 February 2005. The meeting was of particular significance as it was the first since the adoption of the new Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PoA) at the Seventh Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (7WAMM), held in the Fiji Islands from 30 May to 2 June 2004.

The Commonwealth Beijing+10 meeting provided a critical link between the 2005-2015 PoA, the Commonwealth's commitment and contribution to advancing the Beijing+10 process, and the Beijing+10 Review, which was the main focus of the 49th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women held from 28 February to 11 March 2005.

The main objectives of the Commonwealth Beijing+10 meeting were:

- To provide an overview of the new Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015, and a review of progress in implementing the 1995 PoA and its 2000 Update.
- To provide Ministers, senior officials, civil society organisations and partners with an opportunity to network and share experiences on critical challenges in the implementation of the PoA.
- To strengthen partnerships for implementation of the PoA among Commonwealth governments, civil society organisations and international and regional partner agencies.
- To strategise on the Commonwealth's participation in the UN Beijing+10 Review.

There were four sessions in the meeting (see the detailed programme at Annex I).



*The panel at the first session of the Commonwealth Beijing+10 Meeting
L-R: Ms Rachel Mayanja, UN Assistant Secretary-General; Mr Winston Cox, Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General; and Hon Adi Asenaca Caucau, Minister for Women, Poverty Alleviation and Social Welfare, the Fiji Islands.*

The meeting was well attended by some 170 participants, including Ministers, senior officials, civil society organisations, as well as multilateral organisations, with representation from both headquarters and regional offices. The meeting was chaired by the Hon Adi Asenaca Caucau, Minister for Women, Poverty Alleviation and Social Welfare, the Fiji Islands.

This report also covers:

- Commonwealth participation in the Beijing+10 Review, held at the United Nations from 28 February to 11 March 2005;
- A specially convened meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Reference Group, held at the Commonwealth Joint Office, New York, on 1 March 2005; and
- The Terms of Reference of the Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group.

2. Overview of the New Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 and Review of Implementation of the 1995 PoA and its 2000 Update

Welcome

Mr Winston Cox, Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General, welcomed the Chair, Ministers, senior officials, civil society organisations and partners. He expressed his appreciation of the special effort made by participants to arrive in New York prior to attending the 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and commented on the excellent response. He briefly mentioned the continuity between 7WAMM, which he had also attended, and the current meeting. The Chair, Hon Adi Asenaca Caucau, also welcomed the Ministers and delegates to the meeting, and indicated that she would have preferred to have welcomed everyone to her sunny and beautiful country, the Fiji Islands.

Introduction to the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015

Ms Ann Keeling, Director, Social Transformation Programmes Division (STPD), gave a short presentation titled 'Moving Forward Together: the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015'. She focused on the principles underlying the new Commonwealth Plan of Action (PoA), the four critical areas for Commonwealth action in the 2005-2015 decade, and the manner in which the PoA complemented UN processes and reinforced Commonwealth commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and United Nations Security Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on women, peace and security.

Ms Keeling reminded participants that the BPfA had been developed through regional preparatory processes and negotiated by a global conference of over 40,000 women and men in Beijing in 1995, and emphasised that its 12 critical areas of concern were still relevant in shaping the kinds of policies and programmes being undertaken at the national, regional, international and other levels. In preparation for the UN Beijing+10 Review, the Commonwealth had made the decision to define a new PoA to grapple with the current and emerging issues facing member countries in the 2005-2015 decade ahead. The PoA identified four critical areas for Commonwealth action: gender, democracy, peace and conflict; gender, human rights and law; gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment; and gender and HIV/AIDS.

In order to implement the new PoA, Ms Keeling stressed the need for: more effective positioning of gender equality into the mainstream of national, regional and international policy-making, planning and programme delivery; building and strengthening partnerships at all levels with a wide range of stakeholders; recognising the importance of knowledge, information and capacity building; better mobilisation of many kinds of resources; and improved monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

Implementation of 1999 PoA and 2000 update

The report on Commonwealth Secretariat implementation of the 1995 Plan of Action on Gender

and Development (PoA) and its 2000 Update was presented by Dr Rawwida Baksh, Head of the Gender Section, Social Transformation Programmes Division. Following a brief overview of the Commonwealth Secretariat's approaches to promoting gender equality, she detailed the Gender Section's achievements over the last 10 years.

Dr Baksh described the development of the Gender Management System (GMS) as a system-wide framework for embedding gender equality in the mainstream of policy-making, planning, programme delivery, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. A series of over 20 publications and manuals had been developed on gender mainstreaming in a range of sectors and development issues, which were used by many of those present.

Dr Baksh then highlighted some of the successes in the focus areas of the 1995 PoA and its 2000 Update. In the area of gender and democracy, 12 countries now had 20-30 per cent of women in parliament, four countries had achieved the 30 per cent target, while South Africa's Cabinet comprised 47 per cent women. A multisectoral approach had been taken in the area of gender, peace and conflict, and a successful national consultation had been held in Sierra Leone on women and men in partnership for post-conflict reconstruction. The Secretariat had developed an integrated approach to gender-based violence, and 11 Caribbean countries had passed legislation on violence against women while 12 SADC and East African countries had developed national action plans. In addition, the Secretariat had taken the lead in developing gender-responsive budgets (GRBs), which were being implemented in over 50 countries, half of them in the Commonwealth. GRBs had been endorsed by the Finance Ministers Meeting (FMM) in 2003, and a progress report was expected to be tabled at FMM in 2005.

Finally, Dr Baksh looked at the lessons learnt, pointing to the need to deepen the work already begun, to tackle areas of persistent concern with renewed focus, to set new targets and to push beyond the existing boundaries.

Keynote Address

The Keynote Address was delivered by Ms Rachel Mayanja, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (see Annex II). Ms Mayanja referred to the links between the Commonwealth and the UN on gender issues, and also to her personal link with the Commonwealth as a citizen of Uganda, which will host the Eighth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (8WAMM) in 2007.

Ms Mayanja spoke of the critical importance of the 49th Session of the CSW, and how it was a time to assess progress and define future priorities, and also to review the commitments of the Millennium Declaration and the global partnerships required to reach those goals. She felt it was fitting that the meeting would be examining how the Commonwealth could feed into the process – the challenge was of putting the commitments made into action with a sense of urgency and not 'business as usual'.

Indicating that the analysis of national reports had reaffirmed the continuing relevance of the BPfA, Ms Mayanja said that this continued to be a blueprint in all critical areas. The progress in some critical areas had been slower than expected, however, and unless mechanisms were established the MDG targets could be missed. Ms Mayanja pointed out that most countries had strengthened their national women's machineries and had put in place micro credit and employment programmes for women. Improvements were also seen in improving and expanding girls'

education, the addressing of domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, peace and security, and the human rights of women. She also noted that there were persistent gaps between policy and practice and that public attitudes had not changed in tandem with changes to institutional mechanisms. Ms Mayanja ended by saying that the Commonwealth could play a key role in the implementation process, and that the meeting should be a further step towards gender equality and empowerment.

Responses from Ministers, officials and civil society representatives

Antigua and Barbuda: pointed out that the Bureau of Gender Affairs had done an excellent job in trying to bring about gender equity in the constitutional reform and democratisation processes and in running training workshops for pushing the glass ceiling and breaking into the ‘boys’ club’.

Bangladesh: commented on the very rich and thought-provoking discussion and pointed to the need to focus more specifically on the feminisation of migration, trafficking and HIV/AIDS.

Barbados: stressed the importance of strengthening national women’s machineries (NWMs), which were mostly under-resourced and understaffed, and identified culture and ideological barriers as presenting the biggest challenge to achieving gender equality.



The Hon Dr Jacqui C Quinn-Leandro, Minister, Ministry of Labour, Public Administration and Empowerment, Antigua and Barbuda

The Gambia: said that the country was rapidly progressing in reducing gender gaps in education, and that political will and support had created the appropriate environment and programmes for the education of girls.

Ghana: indicated that various progressive measures to achieve gender equality in the country included the improvement of education, expansion of micro credit, introduction of gender-responsive budgets and the President’s Special Initiative to promote garments and textiles.

Jamaica: spoke about the need for a different discourse particularly since, despite girls’ education, there was still violence against women.

Kiribati: noted that their NWM was being reviewed and restructuring would take place so that the scattered islands could be covered. Kiribati also invited the Secretariat to the country to provide expertise and resources.

New Zealand: commended the solid framework that the Commonwealth PoA provided of a shared and agreed vision and spoke of the need to focus on implementation.

Nigeria: indicated that the situation in the country had changed, especially in the field of girls’ education. Attitudinal change was required among men and there was a need for more women in political decision-making.

Sri Lanka: noted that the country had already achieved the MDG in primary education.

St Kitts and Nevis: spoke to the need to work with men and indicated that their programme in which men mentored boys had been a success.

Swaziland: had been touched by the presentation of the UN Assistant Secretary-General about the gap between policy and practice. Mainstreaming gender was critical and the Commonwealth was urged to take it seriously.

South Africa: indicated the country's commitment to advancing gender equality and commented that the Commonwealth PoA was important and that the challenge lay in its implementation.



Ms Maddumage Seetha Rajapakse, Secretary, Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Social Welfare, Sri Lanka.

Trinidad and Tobago: focused on implementation of the Commonwealth PoA and the need to set measurable targets, and to try and develop them before CHOGM, and urged the Secretariat to put in place a taskforce in order to identify two or three priority issues and formulate measurable targets.

United Kingdom (Overseas): spoke about the need to think about the nature of the political process in advancing gender equality.

Zambia: pointed to the need for strengthening public service training and addressing gender imbalances and skills in the public service.

ECOWAS: stressed the role of regional economic groupings and their ability to fast track reducing the gap between policy and practice.

Netright/WILDAF: noted that while the involvement of civil society at 7WAMM was appreciated, the issue of implementation of the PoA raised concerns about representation at other Commonwealth meetings and the availability of financial resources.

Setting up of a drafting committee

It was decided that, in view of the limited time available for drafting the messages that were to be sent from the Women's Affairs Ministers to the UN Beijing+10 Review and to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM, 2005), a Drafting Committee should be constituted that would work during the lunch break. The countries that volunteered to join the Drafting Committee were Australia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Canada, Cameroon, Fiji Islands, Namibia, New Zealand, St Kitts and Nevis, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tonga and the United Kingdom.

Concluding comments

Before breaking for tea the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr Winston Cox, clarified and commented on certain issues. He pointed out that civil society engagement with the various

Commonwealth ministerial meetings had evolved differently. He noted that the issue of gender-responsive budgets was very important, as resource allocation was a key issue in advancing gender equality, and would be taken up in the Finance Ministers Meeting (FMM) in 2005. He also referred to issues related to Mode IV of the GATS Agreement and how the movement of nurses and teachers from developing to developed countries was affecting the level of services in the contributing countries, issues that were being addressed by the Health and Education Sections of the Social Transformation Programmes Division of the Secretariat.

3. Implementation of the New Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015: Ministers' Responses

Commonwealth country priorities

The purpose of the session was:

- To focus on priority issues for the implementation of the PoA; and
- To create the links between the new Commonwealth PoA and the Beijing+10 Review and outcomes.

The session started with a short presentation on the forthcoming *Reference Book for Gender Ministers: A Decade of Commonwealth Action*, made by Ms Maryse Roberts, Adviser, Gender Section at the Commonwealth Secretariat. She gave a brief overview of member countries' prioritisation of the BPfA 12 critical areas of concern – a list that was headed by poverty followed by education, violence against women, institutional mechanisms, power and decision-making, the girl child, human rights, peace/conflict and health. She then looked at some of the progress that had been achieved, including strategies for women's economic empowerment, the breaking of the culture of silence around violence against women, women's increased participation and representation in decision-making, the higher enrolment of girls in schools, and legal reforms and domestication of international human rights instruments.

Ms Roberts noted, however, that much remained to be done. Gender needed to be mainstreamed in poverty eradication policies and programmes; women and young people needed access to quality education and training; the development impacts of HIV/AIDS needed to be addressed; and the 30 per cent target of women in decision-making had still not been achieved in most countries. She suggested that the way forward included brokering strategic partnerships and using resources effectively.

Ministers' plenary session

This was followed by interventions made by Ministers/senior officials/CSOs from countries including Australia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Botswana, Canada, Dominica, Fiji Islands, Grenada, Malawi, Malaysia, Namibia, Nigeria, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Swaziland and the United Kingdom.



Foreground L-R: Ms Peggy Schmeiser, Senior International Analyst, Status of Women, Canada and Ms Florence Ievers, Coordinator of Status of Women, Canada

Foreground L-R: The Hon Ms Alima Mahama, Minister, Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs and Ms Marian A Tackie, Executive Director and Head, Department of Women Affairs, Ghana

4. Building and Strengthening Partnerships

This session consisted of brief presentations on partnerships for implementing the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 by representatives of multilateral and regional agencies and civil society organisations. The main points are outlined below (see Annex III for full presentations received by the Secretariat). Representatives from a number of countries and organisations then made comments.

Presentations

Ms Carolyn Hannan, Director, UN Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW)

Ms Hannan made a strong case for partnerships at all levels in order to meet commitments and reduce the gaps between policy and implementation. She highlighted the challenge of the lack of statistics and the importance of gender-responsive budgets. She also elaborated on the different kinds of partnerships – including with NGOs, with men and boys, and intergenerational partnerships between women. Ms Hannan looked forward to the collaboration necessary to ensure implementation of the PoA.

Dr Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director, UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

Dr Heyzer focused on the progress made in the post-Beijing decade and said that, despite the fact that 179 countries were signatories to CEDAW, progress made was insufficient. Although laws and resolutions had been passed, it was like “walking up an escalator that is going down”. The institutional structure of Women’s Affairs Ministries was weak and they had inadequate resources, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic was also spreading. Partnerships could help in achieving more rapid progress.

Dr Toni Bleie, Chief, Gender and Development Section, Emerging Social Issues Division, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

Dr Bleie referred to the Regional Beijing+10 preparatory meeting held in Bangkok in September 2004, which assessed the progress and challenges in 50 countries of the Asia Pacific region, a number of which were also Commonwealth countries. The Bangkok Communiqué acknowledged progress in areas related to domestic violence, health, life expectancy, education and the creation of a voice for civil society, but noted that progress had been uneven within and between countries. Some of the challenges included NWMs’ lack of resources, violence against women, lack of political representation and illiteracy.

Ms Souad Abdennebi-Abderrahim, Senior Regional Adviser for the Promotion of Women’s Rights, UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)

Ms Abdennebi-Abderrahim mentioned the Regional Beijing+10 preparatory meeting held in Addis Ababa. She highlighted several advances in Africa such as the adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter of Human and Peoples’ Rights, the establishment of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), and gender mainstreaming in the African Union (AU). Ms Abdennebi-Abderrahim pointed to the need for concrete steps to address the gap between commitment and implementation, and mentioned the critical role of partnerships in the functioning of the African Centre for Gender and Development at UNECA. An African Gender Development Index had been formulated as a mechanism to track progress, but the lack of sex-disaggregated data was a major problem.

Ms Abdennebi-Abderrahim also mentioned ongoing collaborative efforts of the UNECA with the Commonwealth Secretariat on gender and trade and the establishment of the Enterprise Development Facility. She identified potential areas for further collaboration with the Secretariat, and indicated the need to pool efforts in Africa in areas including around gender-responsive budgets, poverty eradication and economic empowerment, and improving the collection and analysis of data.

Dr Remi Aribisala, Deputy Executive Secretary, UN Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

Dr Aribisala stated that efforts at gender mainstreaming had been greatly supported by UNECA, UNIFEM and the Commonwealth Secretariat. This support had resulted in the formulation of an ECOWAS Gender Policy in 2005. The core issues in the region were conflict, good governance, poverty and HIV/AIDS. Dr Aribisala said that partnerships were critical and that it was important to be involved with local government and municipalities as these were the agencies that were closest to the poor. She pointed to the need to strengthen the NEPAD platform and suggested that there should be a peer review mechanism for gender equality.



Dr Remi Aribisala, Deputy Executive Secretary, UN Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

Dr Rudo Chitiga, Acting Director, Commonwealth Foundation

Ms Chitiga stated that partnerships had been recognised as a key factor in the development and implementation of the Commonwealth PoA. She explained that the Foundation facilitated the work of civil society organisations through networking at the national, regional and pan-Commonwealth levels; influencing Ministerial meetings; and seeking to strengthen the voice of civil society. Ms Chitiga also expressed appreciation for the Commonwealth Foundation's inclusion in the Gender Reference Group. She indicated that for implementation of the PoA it was important to remember that resources were needed by civil society, and that there was also a need to build civil society capacity. She mentioned that the Commonwealth Foundation had documented lessons learnt from multistakeholder partnerships and was working towards a similar volume on HIV/AIDS and a people's report on the MDGs.

Dr Peggy Antrobus (DAWN)

Dr Antrobus questioned the concept of civil society organisations and stressed that it was important to talk about the women's movement rather than CSOs. The women's movement was critical as it went beyond organisations and institutions and addressed women's equality and empowerment, while some CSOs had actually argued against the BPfA. She made the point that implementation was only a first, though important, step. She stated that a different discourse was required and that there was a need to focus on transformative action. Even where girls were outperforming boys in education, this still did not translate into women's economic empowerment. There had not been a significant redistribution of resources, and violence against women persisted. The women's movement was critical in bringing about change as it could speak out in a way that organisations such as UNIFEM and the Commonwealth Secretariat could not.

Comments

The presentations were followed by comments from a number of participants. Some of the main points are captured below:

The Gambia: Resources were needed in order to implement the PoA. In terms of debt relief, a mechanism for the fulfillment of pledges by donors should be put in place.

Grenada: The road to women's economic empowerment depended on education. Regional organisations needed to assist national governments with capacity building as they could not do it on their own.

New Zealand: The women's movement needed a shared vision and goals and there should be a strong partnership between governments and civil society. It was important to include women who were not part of the mainstream – the disabled, the elderly, etc. For a genuine shared vision, fora were needed where all organisations got together, including government departments, UN agencies and donors. Such fora could look at international obligations (such as CEDAW) and share work and progress. There was a need to break through the glass ceiling and help the women who were on the 'sticky floor'.

St Lucia: There was a need to look at problems rather than successes. One of these was the problem of young men 'on the loose'.

Samoa: The weak implementation of CEDAW was a problem. There was a need to focus on rural women and to reach them through the dissemination of information. It was also important to raise the awareness of decision makers.

Trinidad and Tobago: Culture could also be seen as a positive force in bringing about transformation. There was a strong need to share information on the gender development index (GDI) and to measure progress towards the achievement of the PoA.

UK (Overseas): In the last 10 years, many of the NWMs had not been fully fledged Ministries and they continued to be under-resourced. All the human rights conventions were now extended to the UK Overseas Territories. Changing social and demographic patterns needed to be taken into account, especially to ensure that migrants had rights.

UNHABITAT: It was important to involve cultural leaders at community level to understand the roots of discrimination against women and to address the issues of the homeless, slum dwellers and informal settlers.

Women's Media Caucus: Working with the mainstream media was important, but there should be a conscious effort to include community/alternative media in promoting women's empowerment and gender equality.

5. Final Strategy Session

During the final strategy session, the Ministers' messages for presentation to the UN Beijing+10 Review (Annex IV) and CHOGM, 2005 (Annex V) were presented by the Drafting Committee, negotiated and unanimously adopted.

Commonwealth Ministers' Message to the UN Beijing+10 Review

A Message was prepared by the Ministers to be presented to the UN Beijing+10 Review (Annex IV). In it, Ministers strongly affirmed their commitment to implementing the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 and reaffirmed their commitment to the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and the 2000 Beijing+5 Outcome Document. Equally, they supported the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on women, peace and security in advancing women's rights and gender equality. They emphasised the essential need for BPfA and CEDAW implementation to realise the MDGs.

While recognising that much progress had been made in advancing women's rights in key areas, the Ministers noted that more needed to be done to achieve gender equality at all levels. In particular, they strongly urged governments to take all possible action to promote women's full and equal participation in decision-making. They called for further and immediate measures to address violence against women and to promote and protect women's rights to land, housing, inheritance, property and livelihoods. They urged governments to fully implement UNSCR 1325.

Other issues addressed in the Ministers' Message to the UN Beijing+10 Review were the critical importance of women's economic empowerment and the need for gender-responsive macro-economic policies and processes. They supported the creation of an enabling environment for enhancing opportunities for women's employment, including increasing access to productive resources and improving educational opportunities for girls. They affirmed their commitment to the overall health of women including their reproductive health and rights, particularly in the context of HIV/AIDS.

The Ministers also called for strengthened partnerships at all levels – between Commonwealth governments, civil society and other partners – and emphasised that partnership with men and boys was critical to advancing the rights of women and girls.

Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group

The Beijing+10 Meeting agreed that a Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group should replace the Commonwealth Gender Reference Group (CGRG) established at the Commonwealth 7WAMM Preparatory Meeting of Heads of National Women's Machineries, held in New York on 1-2 March 2003. The CGRG had effectively concluded its work on the development of the new Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PoA). The new Group, which was mandated by the PoA (para. 4.22, p. 57), would function as a mechanism for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the PoA in order to strengthen its implementation, a core concern raised at 7WAMM.

Ministers agreed in plenary that the Secretariat should convene a special meeting in New York of

the original members of the CGRG, and Australia, to develop the Revised Draft Terms of Reference for the new Group. These were to be sent to Ministers for feedback within 30 days.

The specially convened meeting was held on 1 March 2005 (see Annex VI). It prepared the Revised Draft Terms of Reference for the new Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group, which was sent to all Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers for their feedback by 20 May 2005.

The final Terms of Reference for the Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group (see Annex VII) incorporated feedback received from Ministers.

Commonwealth Working Group on UNSCR 1325

The Beijing+10 Meeting began discussion of the proposal prepared by the Secretariat for the establishment of a Commonwealth Working Group on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on women, peace and security. Further discussion of this agenda item was referred to the specially convened meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Reference Group held in New York on 1 March 2005 (see Annex VI).

The 1 March meeting agreed that the Commonwealth Secretariat would prepare a revised proposal for the Working Group that should address such issues as its justification, mandate, strategic focus, membership, funding and feasibility. The proposal would be circulated to Ministers for their approval, and Ministers would be given 30 days in which to respond. Once they had approved the establishment of the Commonwealth Working Group on UNSCR 1325, the Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group would be tasked with drafting its Terms of Reference, including membership.

Australia's Motion

Australia moved a motion that the 'final draft' statements, resolutions and draft communiqués (or any other documents that require CMRWA endorsements) be available to delegations 15 working days before the meeting.

Australia further moved that it be acknowledged that in order to achieve 'final draft' status documents must have been circulated to member countries for comments in a timely manner ahead of session.

Closing of Meeting

The Beijing+10 meeting ended with a vote of thanks by Mr Winston Cox to the Chair and to the Ministers, senior officials, representatives of civil society organisations and partners, who had participated actively throughout the day.

6. Commonwealth Secretariat Participation in the UN Beijing+10 Review

During the UN Commission on the Status of Women's Beijing+10 Review, the Commonwealth Secretariat's presentation to the High Level Plenary Session was made by Ms Ann Keeling, Director, Social Transformation Pro-grammes Division (Appendix IX). She noted that Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs had met prior to the CSW and affirmed their commitment to implementing a new Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015. She introduced the new PoA, which she described as the Commonwealth's vision for the new decade, and linked it with the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, the 2000 Beijing+5 Outcome Document and the Millennium Development Goals. She also highlighted progress made at national level against previous Commonwealth PoAs, and in gender mainstreaming in the Commonwealth Secretariat.



Ms Ann Keeling making the Commonwealth Secretariat's presentation to the High Level Plenary Session at the UN Beijing+10 Review

Dr Rawwida Baksh, Head of Gender Section, Social Transformation Programmes Division made a presentation at the UNDAW High Level Panel on the Role of Regional and Intergovernmental Agencies in Promoting Gender Equality (Appendix X). In addition to speaking to the new 2005-2015 PoA, her presentation addressed how the Commonwealth Secretariat works on gender equality issues and also offered examples of best practice at country level.



Dr Rawwida Baksh, 2nd from right, at the UNDAW High Level Panel on the Role of Regional and Intergovernmental Agencies in Promoting Gender Equality

Annexes

- I Revised Provisional Agenda
- II Feature Address by Ms Rachel Mayanja, UN Assistant Secretary-General
- III Presentations by Partner Agencies on Building and Strengthening Partnerships:
 - Dr Noeleen Heyzer, UNIFEM
 - Dr Tone Bleie, UNESCAP
 - Dr Peggy Antrobus, DAWN
- IV Message from Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers to the United Nations Beijing+10 Review
- V Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers' Message to CHOGM, Malta 2005
- VI Report of a Specially Convened Meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Reference Group, 1 March 2005
- VII Terms of Reference for the Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group
- VIII Schedule of Commonwealth Side Events at the Beijing+10 Review
- IX Commonwealth Secretariat Presentation at the UN High Level Plenary Session on the Review of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and the 2000 Outcome Document of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly by Ms Ann Keeling
- X Commonwealth Secretariat Presentation at the UNDAW High Level Panel on the Role of Regional and Intergovernmental Agencies in Promoting Gender Equality by Dr Rawwida Baksh
- XI Participants' List

Annex I: Revised Provisional Agenda

0830 – 0900 **Registration**

0900 – 1030 **Welcome**

- Mr Winston Cox
Deputy Secretary-General (Development Co-operation), Commonwealth Secretariat

Chairperson’s Opening Remarks

- The Hon Ms Adi Asenaca Caucau
Minister, Ministry for Women, Poverty Alleviation and Social Welfare, the Fiji Islands

Overview of the New Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PoA)

- Ms Ann Keeling
Director, Social Transformation Programmes Division (STPD), Commonwealth Secretariat

Feature Address

- Ms Rachel Mayanja
UN Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, OSAGI
 - UN Beijing+10 Review
 - The role of the new Commonwealth PoA in advancing Beijing+10 outcomes

Review of ComSec’s Implementation of the 1995 PoA and 2000 Update

- Dr Rawwida Baksh
Head of Gender Section, Commonwealth Secretariat

1030– 1100 ***Tea/Coffee Break***

1100 – 1300 **Commonwealth Country Priorities**

- Ms Maryse Roberts
Adviser, Gender Section, Commonwealth Secretariat

Ministers’ Plenary Session: Implementing the New PoA

- Gender, Democracy, Peace and Conflict
- Gender, Human Rights and Law
- Gender, Poverty Eradication and Economic Empowerment
- Gender and HIV/AIDS

1300 – 1400 ***Lunch***

1400 – 1530 **Building and Strengthening Partnerships**

- Multilateral Agencies
- Regional Organisations
- Commonwealth Foundation
- CSO Representative

1530 – 1600 ***Tea/Coffee Break***

1600 – 1730 **Final Strategy Session**

- Commonwealth Participation in UN Beijing+10 Review
- Commonwealth Gender Reference Group
- Commonwealth Working Group on UNSCR 1325 – Women, Peace and Security

1730 **Closing**

Annex II: Feature Address

by Ms Rachel Mayanja, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General, Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women

Madam Chairperson, Excellencies, distinguished participants, representatives of civil society:

I am deeply honoured to have this opportunity to be with you today and to participate in the Commonwealth Beijing+10 Meeting of Ministers, Senior Officials, Civil Society Organisations and Partners. At the outset, I would like to thank the organisers for their kind invitation and warm hospitality, particularly Ms Ann Keeling, Director of the Social Transformation Programmes Division and her colleagues.

First, allow me to emphasise the very warm, longstanding and special relationship between the United Nations and the Commonwealth on gender issues – the links that have been developed over many years and the way in which both organisations have made a very diverse and very significant contribution to gender equality. For me personally it is a very special occasion, recognising my relationship with both the United Nations and the Commonwealth, for the former being Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and for the latter being a citizen of a Commonwealth country – Uganda, which will host the next meeting of Ministers Responsible for Women’s Affairs.

The Commonwealth is, perhaps, one of the most successful alliances in modern history, founded on shared values and working for the collective good of all women and men.

Madam Chairperson,

The forty-ninth session of the Commission is taking place at a critical time in the advancement of women. The year 2005 marks the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women. Tomorrow the Commission on the Status of Women will commence assessment of the progress made in the implementation, at the national level, of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Outcome Document of the twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly, ‘Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace’, and define future priorities.

It is also the year of the high level Plenary Meeting of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, which will undertake a comprehensive review of the progress made in fulfillment of all the commitments contained in the Millennium Declaration, including the internationally agreed development targets and the global partnership required for their achievement. The fact that this session of the Commission on the Status of Women on Beijing+10 will take place in the year of Millennium+5 provides an incentive as well as an opportunity to place gender equality high on the intergovernmental agenda aimed at achieving the goals and objectives of the Millennium Declaration.

It is, therefore, most fitting that your meeting is examining the ways in which the Commonwealth can contribute to the review and appraisal of Beijing+10 and the Millennium+5 review.

As a contribution to Beijing+10, the 7th Commonwealth Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Women’s Affairs, held in June 2004 in the Fiji Islands, adopted the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015, aligning its plan of work with the Millennium Declaration,

including the internationally agreed goals. The PoA builds on gains made in implementing earlier Commonwealth plans on gender and Beijing+5. It groups its priorities around four critical areas that are integral parts of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration, namely:

- 1 Gender, democracy, peace and conflict;
- 2 Gender, human rights and law;
- 3 Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment; and
- 4 Gender and HIV/AIDS.

The challenge that we face during Beijing+10 is to put into action the commitments made to women by Member States in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration. Beijing+10 must maintain the 'Beijing and Millennium spirit' and proceed with a sense of urgency, not business as usual.

Our analysis of replies received from 134 Member States and one Observer shows that the vast majority of countries reconfirmed the importance or continuing relevance of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Outcome Document of the twenty-third Special Session, and remained committed to their full implementation. The Platform continues to be the 'blueprint' for our actions in all 12 critical areas.

Member States, which have the primary responsibility for gender equality in their countries in co-operation with UN entities and civil society, have been successful, though to various degrees, in taking practical actions and setting priorities within and across sectors and institutions, taking into account national and regional contexts. Generally they have achieved some positive results. However, in some critical areas and in some regions progress has been limited and uneven, and often at a pace much slower than expected. For example, progress was reported in:

- Improvement of national machineries for the advancement of women;
- Participation of women in the economy through comprehensive national employment strategies, employment creation, micro credit and small business schemes;
- Improvement of women's income security;
- In most regions, women live longer and healthier lives;
- Improvement in women's and girls' education;
- Increase in efforts to stop violence against women, in particular domestic violence;
- Intensification of awareness-raising of the impact of HIV/AIDS on women and girls;
- Recognition of women's role in peace and security;
- Increase in mechanisms to protect and promote the human rights of women, including the adoption of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW;
- Greater attention to the participation and representation of women in the public sector, including setting targets or quotas for women.

Nevertheless, a large gap remains between policy and practice in regard to gender equality:

- Public attitudes toward the advancement of women and gender equality have not changed at the same pace as policy, legal and constitutional frameworks;
- The realisation of the MDGs related to women's and girls' education has been elusive;
- Stereotypical attitudes and discriminatory practices persist;
- The extent of poverty among women is deepening;
- Violence against women continues unabated;
- Women's share of the unemployed and illiterate is shockingly large;
- Women's mortality rates are still unacceptably high in most regions;

- Women are still a minority in positions of power and discrimination remains a permanent feature of all societies, without exception;
- Prevalence of HIV/AIDS has increased among women;
- Trafficking in women and girls is on the increase;
- Discrimination in law, policy or practice continues to deprive women of their human rights;
- Women continue to suffer from gender-based violence and abuse during wars and carry the main responsibility for ensuring the survival of their families.

In some areas where concrete targets have been established to reach the Millennium Development Goals, this progress was not sufficient to achieve the Goals thus creating the risk that, short of bold actions on the part of governments and civil society, these targets may be missed. For instance, the education parity target for 2005 is likely to be missed for girls in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, while in North Africa and East Asia strong progress was made.

Distinguished participants,

I submit to you that the time has come for us to make a strong commitment to implementation. Undoubtedly, this will require a commitment of resources and re-enforcement of knowledge and capacity through such means as training, establishment of quantifiable goals and performance indicators and instituting monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

Madam Chairperson, distinguished participants,

The consensus on gender equality and empowerment of women embodied in the goals and objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Outcome Document was reached after a thorough and transparent process of discussion, consultation and negotiation, reflecting many years of experience. It included the contributions of all faiths, all political points of view and all approaches. It is a firm foundation for action.

As I mentioned earlier, we have the blueprint for action – the Beijing Platform for Action. We have the commitments made by Member States to women. We have the necessary skills and instruments at our disposal. We must enlarge and nourish the partnership among governments, civil society (including non-governmental organisations), international organisations and the private sector. Let us get on with the implementation of these commitments, lest 10 years from now we may be found lacking in results. I am convinced that the Commonwealth can play a key role to get the momentum for implementation going. Let your meeting this morning be a further step in women's progress towards empowerment and gender equality. The last 10 years have been years of discussion, reconciliation and norm- and standard-setting. Our rights as women and our contributions to society are now universally acknowledged. Let us dedicate ourselves now and for the future to the task of transforming norms into reality.

Madam Chairperson, Excellencies and distinguished participants, I wish you success in your deliberations.

Annex III: Presentations by Partner Agencies on Building and Strengthening Partnerships

- **Dr Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)**

Esteemed delegates, colleagues and friends,

Ten years after Beijing, the signs of progress are many. To date, 179 governments have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and many are reviewing and amending their constitutions and laws to address discrimination against women; 165 countries have set up national machineries; and over 120 have adopted national plans of action for gender equality. Laws are being drafted to strengthen women's economic security in such vital areas as land, property and inheritance rights, decent employment and access to credit and markets. At least 45 countries today have laws against domestic violence, while 21 more are drafting new legislation or amending criminal assault laws to include domestic violence. Governments are beginning to adopt gender-sensitive laws and policies on HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care. And quotas or other affirmative measures have been adopted to increase women's representation in political decision-making in countries in all regions, including many countries emerging from conflict that are striving to build peaceful and more democratic societies.

And yet, while we celebrate progress, we know that it has been too slow. The image that comes to mind is that of walking up an escalator that is going down. Thirty years after the beginning of the Decade on Women, and ten years after Beijing, it is still a woman's face we see when we speak of poverty, of HIV/AIDS, of violent conflict and social upheaval, of trafficking in human beings. We are not making progress when women and girls are still working in sweatshops in many countries around the world. We are not making progress when 1 million women and girls are trafficked every year and when violence against women, already horrific in times of peace, has become routine as a weapon of war. We are not making progress when rates of HIV/AIDS infection for women and girls are outpacing those of men and boys, reaching 58 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa.

To break the cycles of poverty, violence and gender discrimination, we need to accelerate progress and expand its reach. What will it take?

Above all, it takes determined implementation and greater accountability. Laws and policy frameworks can only go so far. In the area of violence against women, for example, where many good laws are now in place, the challenge is to translate laws into change. Since responses are often hampered by a lack of accurate data and statistics, UNIFEM is supporting efforts to improve the generation and use of data in Egypt, India, Jordan, Mexico, St Lucia, Syria, Thailand and Zimbabwe. In Mexico, UNIFEM worked with the Ministry of Health to conduct a survey on domestic violence in 2003 and, using the results, developed protocols and services for health-care providers to better identify and address violence. A follow-up study conducted by the Institute of Women and the National Statistical Institute revealed that among the most vulnerable were women between the ages of 15 and 19 who were married as well as migrant workers, resulting in more targeted investments and stronger legislation to combat intimate partner violence. A high priority for the next year is to strengthen our work on linkages between violence against women and HIV/AIDS.

Second, mainstream institutions must be transformed to make gender concerns an integral part of their policies, programmes and practices. Too often gender is included in a programme or policy statement and ignored in mechanisms for implementation or monitoring of results. Women have recognised that if you want to see how governments are implementing their commitments to women, follow the money. UNIFEM is working in over 30 countries to support national and local initiatives to include gender perspectives in budgeting processes and to collect and use sex-disaggregated data in public policy formulation. In India, Morocco and Uganda, sustained advocacy has led in the last year to agreements by decision makers in Ministries of Finance to alter budget processes to increase support to women.

Finally, strengthening the institutional architecture of gender equality within the multilateral system means investing in a stronger institutional advocate for gender. It is not just a matter of placing gender experts within these institutions. Increasing gender expertise or other technical measures cannot in themselves replace a lack of political will or authority to close the implementation gap. We know what works – but without a strong gender advocate with sufficient status, authority and resources, this knowledge and expertise will not be used. This is a waste that we cannot afford.

Many effective strategies for achieving gender equality have been developed over the past 30 years through efforts to implement CEDAW and the Beijing Platform, and these proven approaches can be upscaled and utilised in strategies to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

But we cannot wait another 30 years. In September, the world's governments will meet to review progress towards the MDGs, adopted at the Millennium Summit in 2000. The Millennium Declaration makes clear that gender equality is important not only as a goal in itself, but for achieving all the other goals. If we are to find sustainable solutions to the challenges identified in the Declaration, including both human development and human security, the world's women – one half of its population – must be empowered to contribute their knowledge and insights to the process.

Women and girls everywhere want to see that the MDGs are not just a set of targets and indicators, but rather a set of principles and commitments that put a priority on achieving a world free of poverty, violence and inequality. We look forward to a stronger set of commitments and guidance from the session of the Commission on the Status of Women that starts tomorrow to carry what we have learned since Beijing into the Millennium Summit in September.

It has taken 30 years to get this far. We must now urgently move forward on implementation, accountability and adequate resources to bring about a world in which people live lives that are free of want and free of fear. We owe this to the next generation.

- **Dr Tone Bleie, Chief, Gender and Development Section, Emerging Social Issues, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)**

In September 2004, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) hosted a high-level intergovernmental meeting to review the Beijing Platform for Action's implementation in the UNESCAP region. The outcome, known as the Bangkok Communiqué, conveys a significant message on political commitments as well as the state of progress and failures in achieving equality and equity for women and girls in the more than 50 countries of the Asia and Pacific region that are members and associate members of UNESCAP. A number of our member countries are also members of the Commonwealth and represented here today.

The Bangkok Communiqué acknowledges that significant strides have been made in:

- Formulating policies that acknowledge and promote gender equality;
- Formulating and revising domestic laws and regulations;
- Improving women's health and life expectancy; and
- Enhancing women's voices in civil society.

The Communiqué recognises that these achievements are uneven between and within countries:

- National machineries often lack recognition and are under-resourced.
- Women continue to face discrimination, often underpinned by lacking implementation of laws, and by patriarchal cultural norms, preventing their full participation in public life.
- Particular age groups of women face serious health risks and do not have access to quality health services.
- Among the rural and urban poor, women are the most dispossessed, having the least entitlements.
- Women and girls are still subject to multiple forms of violence, both in situations of peace and of armed conflict.
- Women's unpaid work, comprising reproductive, subsistence and other so-called family labour, remains largely unaccounted for in national accounts.
- The consequences of macroeconomic policies for women's capabilities to ensure their own and family members' basic rights often remain ignored.
- Women's pursuits for survival and safer livelihoods face various layers of discrimination due to migration, citizenship and property laws, trafficking and non-recognition of labour rights and laws.

At the regional level, the gaps between women and men are diminishing in education and health, while gender gaps remain enormous in political representation in national and regional institutions. Another dimension to gender inequity are staggering disparities between the region's women and girls in certain vital areas. Hundreds of millions of the region's women take higher education for granted, live in relative opulence and expect to live until old age. At the same time, hundreds of millions of women and girls remain illiterate, struggle daily to meet their most basic human needs and face significant risks of dying during their childhood or in their reproductive years.

Considering political empowerment, the regional situation gives reason for great concern. The indicator – representation in parliament – shows that only a small number of countries do reasonably well (i.e., women accounted for more than 20 per cent of the members of parliament in

2003). This group comprises both developed and developing countries. Clearly, there is currently no necessary direct connection between economic development, greater gender equality in terms of access to education and women's political empowerment.

The Beijing Declaration and BPfA, firmly based as they are on CEDAW, represent perhaps the most ambitious and detailed normatively-based policies and plans ever made by the United Nations. They commit member governments to address and transform the least obvious and recognised, but nonetheless most pervasive, form of social and economic hierarchies in our societies.

Regardless of class, ethnicity, nationality and region, women are subjected to similar forms of violence. Across the UNESCAP region, women articulating gender-responsive policies and interests exert at best a marginal influence within the most important national and international political and financial institutions, at a time of accelerating market-led development, unsustainable use of natural resources and lessened scope for States to fulfill their responsibilities as duty holders.

UNESCAP, through its overall mandate and its specific role as the regional nodal agency for reviewing the implementation of the BPfA, remains committed to supporting its member governments in consolidating and accelerating the progress made, and to assisting through policy facilitation, analytical work and capacity building with member governments to progressively realise their commitments in addressing the most pervasive and hitherto unaddressed forms of gender-based inequities.

The current existence of able and committed policy makers, civil servants and civil society actors represents a strategic leverage, which has to be built upon in every possible way. Closely connected to these opportunities for increased partnerships is a closer and more committed collaboration both with other UN organisations and bodies and with other intergovernmental organisations, not least with the Commonwealth.

There are some major challenges identified by us, which correspond closely with the Commonwealth priorities in the PoA for Gender Equality 2005-2015. These challenges include:

- To assist member governments to use the current pace of upscaling of public investments into education, created by the Millennium Development Goals, to fully ensure rights within education and rights through education.
- To assist governments in pursuing a more balanced mix of social policies, macro-economic poverty reduction strategies and migration policies that are responsive to the increasingly highly qualified feminised labour force, to the feminised vocational labour force and to women farmers and day labourers.
- To better address women's rights and needs in situations of war and civil unrest, including promoting gender-responsive capacity building for peace building.
- To promote a gender-responsive leadership in national and regional political and financial institutions.

The Commonwealth's ambitious Plan of Action gives a sense of global direction to the struggle for greater justice and sustainable development, and opens – as UNESCAP sees it – a considerable and much needed space for international collaboration.

- **Dr Peggy Antrobus, DAWN, representing CSOs**

Excellencies, distinguished participants. I want to start by congratulating the Commonwealth Secretariat for its work on gender equality and to thank the Commonwealth Foundation for the invitation to speak on this occasion as a representative of civil society organisations (CSOs).

Civil society covers a wide spectrum, and I think it is always important to be specific about the sector of civil society to which one is referring. In the context of the Beijing Platform for Action, the critical sector is the women's movement, and I am proud to identify myself with this movement, and specifically with DAWN, the network of Third World women, researchers and activists promoting 'development alternatives with women for a new era'. My definition of a women's movement is important: I am speaking of a social movement that aims at promoting gender equality and women's rights and empowerment. I distinguish this from women's organisations and associations, although many of these are part of the women's movement. However, there are also a number of women who are against women's rights and empowerment. Many of them are here at the UN Beijing+10 Review, well organised and funded to reverse the gains made in the Programmes of Action from the global conferences held in Vienna (human rights), Cairo (population) and Beijing (women) during the decade of the 1990s. The broad term 'civil society organisation' includes these and others who do not support the Beijing Platform for Action and are here to challenge and undermine it.

I also want to say that my definition of a women's movement goes beyond women's organisations to include individual women, those within bureaucracies like the UN and the Commonwealth Secretariat. This movement was responsible in large part for the preparation and adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action and is the chief protagonist for its development.

After listening to the impressive list of achievements in the presentations today, I am wondering whether anything new remains to be done! However, there is clearly a gap between the rhetoric and the reality, as well as a number of limitations, even in the implementation of the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action. A gender ideology that discriminates against women remains intact and threatens to undermine the gains we have made. Indeed, we shall see evidence of this in the coming days as the women's movement and their allies struggle to defend fundamental rights that were won in Cairo and Beijing 10 years ago.

Regarding the implementation of some of the recommendations of the BPfA:

- What does it mean that women head important institutions when thousands of women suffer each day from gender-based violence?
- What does it mean that 47 per cent of the cabinet of South Africa is female when that country has one of the highest rates of HIV/AIDS in the world?
- What does it mean that in the Caribbean girls outperform boys at every level of education when this does not translate into more employment or better incomes than those of men?
- What does it mean that governments regularly reaffirm and endorse the BPfA when they consistently fail to provide the resources to make the mechanisms set up to promote and monitor progress effective?

As someone said, we need a different discourse. I like to make a distinction between an affirmative action approach to gender equality and women's empowerment, and a transformative approach. An affirmative action approach is focused on numbers: the number of women in parliament, in schools, heading corporations.... But this is only the first, and necessary, step towards

the transformation of the relations of power that perpetuate the oppression and subordination of women and block policies that would address issues of importance to women's gender interests.

This brings me to the contribution of women's movements to the realisation of the goals of gender equality and women's empowerment. The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 identifies the following role for CSOs:

- Providing the capacity and experience to implement the Plan and to propose alternative approaches to government policies;
- Lobbying governments;
- Monitoring government action; and
- Providing additional resources.

But I want to identify other roles:

- Women's movements can speak out and say things that governments and officials are unlikely to, or cannot, say.
- They can hold governments accountable to the pledges they made to these Plans.
- They can mobilise men and women to challenge patriarchal privilege and the gender ideology that serves to perpetuate the marginalisation, exploitation and subordination of women.
- They can push for changes in laws and discriminatory attitudes towards women.
- They can generate the political will for the provision of resources, without which the Plans of Action remain bits of paper without meaning to the lives of women.

In short, women's movements play a crucial role in the implementation of the Beijing Platform and Commonwealth Plan of Action. Without an active women's movement, change is slow and largely cosmetic. Official programmes like those of the Commonwealth Secretariat and Foundation, the UN and our national governments, need the energy and commitment of women's movements to complement their best efforts and push them to do better.

Annex IV: Message from Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers to the United Nations Beijing+10 Review

We, the Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers, meeting on 27 February 2005 in New York, representing 53 member States and covering 5 regions, affirm our commitment to implementing the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015. The four critical areas of the Plan of Action are: gender, democracy, peace and conflict; gender, human rights and law; gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment; and gender and HIV/AIDS.

We strongly reaffirm our commitment to the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2000 Beijing+5 Outcome Document and stress the importance of their full implementation at national, regional and international levels.

We equally support CEDAW and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in advancing women's rights and gender equality. We also emphasise the essential need for the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW implementation to realise the MDGs.

Having agreed to the Commonwealth Plan of Action at the 7th Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting in the Fiji Islands, 30 May-2 June 2004, we acknowledge that women's rights and gender equality continue to be essential preconditions for national advancement.

Recognising that much progress has been made in advancing women's rights in key areas, we note that more needs to be done to achieve gender equality at all levels.

Acknowledging that some governments have achieved the Commonwealth target of 30 per cent women's political representation, we strongly urge governments to take all possible action to promote women's full and equal participation in decision-making.

Recognising that women's rights are human rights, we call for further and immediate measures to address violence against women, and to promote and protect women's rights to land, housing, inheritance, property and livelihoods.

Acknowledging the critical importance of women's economic empowerment, we emphasise the need for gender-responsive macroeconomic policies and processes. We support the creation of an enabling environment for enhanced opportunities for women's employment, including increasing access to productive resources and improving educational opportunities for girls.

Acknowledging the importance of women's health, the health of their families and communities, and the impact of HIV/AIDS, we affirm our commitment to ensuring the overall health of women including their reproductive health and rights.

Acknowledging the negative impact of conflicts on women and children, we urge governments to fully implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR1325) on women, peace and security.

Resolving to build on the Commonwealth's shared values, we call for strengthened partnerships at all levels: between Commonwealth governments, civil society and other partners.

We also emphasise that partnership with men and boys is critical to advancing the rights of women and girls.

Together, let us work to achieve equality, peace and development for all.

Annex V: Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers' Message to CHOGM, 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 UN 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 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on women, peace and security – to advance the achievement of women's rights and gender equality in member States and globally.

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.

Annex VI: Report of a Specially Convened Meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Reference Group, 1 March 2005

Venue: Commonwealth Joint Office, New York

Chair: Ann Keeling, Director, Social Transformation Programmes Division, Commonwealth Secretariat

Members Present: The meeting was attended by 12 of the 14 member countries representing Africa, Asia, Caribbean/Canada, Europe and the Pacific on the Commonwealth Gender Reference Group (CGRG). The CGRG was established at the Commonwealth 7WAMM Preparatory Meeting of Heads of National Women's Machineries, held in New York on 1-2 March 2003. In addition, Australia was also represented at the meeting, as agreed by the Commonwealth Beijing+10 Meeting of Ministers, Senior Officials, Civil Society Organisations and Partners held in New York on 27 February 2005. One civil society representative attended the meeting. The list of members who were present at the meeting can be found below.

- 1 The Chair welcomed representatives of the Commonwealth Gender Reference Group to the meeting. She explained that the meeting had been called in response to a request made by the Commonwealth Beijing+10 Meeting held in New York on 27 February 2005.
- 2 The Chair gave the background to the proposed Commonwealth Gender Reference Group and circulated a revised Terms of Reference paper for discussion. She indicated that the new Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 mandates that: "A Commonwealth Gender Reference Group, consisting of a rotating core of NWMs and representatives of CSOs from all the regions, will be established to assist with monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the PoA" (para. 4.22, p 57).
- 3 The Beijing+10 Meeting agreed that the Draft Terms of Reference for the new Commonwealth Gender Reference Group mandated by the PoA 2005-2015, henceforth to be called the Commonwealth PoA Monitoring Group (CPMG), should be developed by a specially convened meeting of the members of the original CGRG, plus Australia, and should be sent to Ministers for their approval.
- 4 India's delegate placed on record that she was unable to participate in the meeting since she had no mandate to comment on the proposed CGRG and the Commonwealth Working Group on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on women, peace and security, due to the ComSec's late circulation of documents for the Beijing+10 Meeting held on 27 February 2005. At this point, the Indian representative left the meeting.
- 5 The meeting agreed on the following recommendations:
 - (i) Since the Commonwealth Gender Reference Group (CGRG) has effectively concluded its work, it should be succeeded by the new Commonwealth PoA Monitoring Group (CPMG).
 - (ii) The CPMG should be established in accordance with the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015, to function as a mechanism for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the PoA in order to strengthen its implementation, a core concern raised at the Ministers' Meeting on 27 February 2005.

- (iii) The responsibilities of the CPMG should be as follows:
- To provide advice to the Commonwealth Secretariat on the development of PoA indicators;
 - To identify the most appropriate monitoring and evaluation framework to: (a) meet the requirements of para. 4.19 of the PoA in harmonising the Secretariat's reporting on the PoA with CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action processes, the MDG goals and targets and UNSCR 1325 in order to reduce the burden of reporting on NWMs and to avoid duplication; and (b) ensure effective implementation of the PoA;
 - To provide advice to the Commonwealth Secretariat on the mid-term review of the PoA in 2010 and updates as required, as well as the next steps beyond the current tenure of the PoA, which ends in 2015; and
 - To consider any issue that may be referred to it by Ministers and work with the Secretariat to develop additional Terms of Reference, as required.
- (iv) The CPMG will be a virtual group, but will meet annually in conjunction with meetings of Commonwealth Heads of NWMs in the wings of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York, as required. The CPMG will be co-ordinated by the Commonwealth Secretariat.
- (v) In the interest of continuity and to facilitate the PoA monitoring process, the members of the original Commonwealth Gender Reference Group set up on 1-2 March 2003, as well as Australia, would be the first members of the Commonwealth PoA Monitoring Group. The members of the CPMG would thus be as follows:
- **Africa:** The Gambia, Uganda, South Africa;
 - **Asia:** India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka;
 - **Caribbean/Canada:** Canada, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis;
 - **Europe:** Malta, United Kingdom;
 - **Pacific:** Australia, Fiji Islands, Kiribati, New Zealand;
 - **Civil Society:** Commonwealth Foundation and one civil society representative from each region (Africa, Asia, Caribbean/Canada, Europe and Pacific).
- (vi) With regard to membership, the Commonwealth PoA Monitoring Group should be rotated biennially, with one member per region rotating out after the first year. The decision as to which member from each region would be rotated after the first year will be taken at the first meeting of the CPMG, to be held in the wings of the 50th Session of the CSW in New York in February/March 2006. Volunteers for this rotation in advance of the meeting would be welcomed.
- 6 The Chair introduced the issue of establishing a Commonwealth Working Group on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on women, peace and security, which had been referred from the Beijing+10 Meeting on 27 February 2005. The meeting made the following recommendations on this proposed Working Group:
- (i) The Secretariat should develop a proposal on the Commonwealth Working Group on UNSCR 1325 to be sent to Ministers for their approval. The proposal should address the following questions:
- Why should the Commonwealth set up such a Working Group to address a UN Security Council resolution and programme?
 - What would be its mandate and strategic focus, to ensure that there is no overlap with

- other global mechanisms for monitoring UNSCR 1325 and that it focuses on strategic implementation (and not just on monitoring and reporting on implementation)?
 - Who would constitute its membership? Its membership should be consistent with its mandate and strategic focus.
 - How would it be funded and how would the resources be managed?
 - How would it operate and what are the tasks involved – in order to assess and ensure its potential feasibility?
- (ii) Once they have approved the establishment of the Commonwealth Working Group on UNSCR 1325, Ministers could task the CPMG with drafting its Terms of Reference, including membership.
- 7 It was agreed that the Commonwealth Secretariat would undertake a number of follow-up actions to the meeting:
- Prepare the revised draft Terms of Reference for the Commonwealth PoA Monitoring Group (CPMG) and circulate it to Ministers for their approval.
 - Prepare the proposal for the Commonwealth Working Group on UNSCR 1325 and circulate it to Ministers for their approval.
 - Ministers would be given 30 days in which to respond to the Draft Terms of Reference and the proposed Commonwealth Working Group on UNSCR 1325, as agreed at the Beijing+10 Meeting on 27 February 2005.
- 8 The Chair thanked delegates for their participation in the meeting and for facilitating the process of building Commonwealth consensus on the two issues placed before them.

Members represented at the meeting:

AFRICA

The Gambia: Hon Fatou L Faye, Minister of Education
E-mail: ffaye76@yahoo.com

South Africa: Joyce Maluleke, Director, Gender Unit, Department of Justice and Constitutional Development
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Uganda: Jane Sanju Mpagi, Director – Gender, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
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ASIA

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CARIBBEAN/CANADA

Canada: Peggy Schmeiser, Senior Policy Analyst (Domestic/International), Status of Women
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Jamaica: Margaret May Macaulay, Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA)

St Kitts and Nevis: Ingrid Charles-Gumbs, Ministry of Community, Social Development and Gender Affairs

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PACIFIC

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Fiji Islands: Emele Duituturaga, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry for Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation

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New Zealand: Carolyn Risk, Strategy Development Leader, Ministry of Women's Affairs

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CIVIL SOCIETY (African Region)

Bernice Sam, National Programme Co-ordinator, Women in Law and Development (WILDAF)

COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT

Ann Keeling, Director, Social Transformation Programmes Division

Rawwida Baksh, Head of Gender Section

Maryse Roberts, Adviser, KBN for Gender Mainstreaming, Good Governance and PoA Monitoring

Elsie Onubogu, Programme Officer, Gender, Democracy, Peace and Conflict

Annex VII: Terms of Reference for the Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group (CGPMG)

This Terms of Reference for the Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group (CGPMG) was developed through the following process:

- A Draft Terms of Reference for a Commonwealth PoA Monitoring Group was tabled by the Commonwealth Secretariat at the Commonwealth Beijing+10 meeting, which was referred by Ministers to a specially convened meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Reference Group held in New York on 1 March 2005;
- A Revised Draft Terms of Reference for a Commonwealth PoA Monitoring Group, prepared by the Gender Reference Group on 1 March, was circulated to all Ministers for feedback by 20 May 2005;
- This final Terms of Reference for the renamed Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group (CGPMG) includes feedback received from Ministers.

Background

The Commonwealth 7WAMM Preparatory Meeting of Heads of National Women's Machineries (NWMs), held in New York on 1-2 March 2003, established a Commonwealth Gender Reference Group (CGRG) to work with the Secretariat to contribute to the development of the new Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015. The Group comprised two to three senior officials and one civil society representative from each of the five Commonwealth regions. The Terms of Reference for the original Commonwealth Gender Reference Group is included below. The Group was co-ordinated by the Commonwealth Secretariat as a virtual network and has now discharged its full responsibilities.

The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 states in para. 4.22 (p. 57) that "A Commonwealth Gender Reference Group, consisting of a rotating core of NWMs and representatives of CSOs from all the regions, will be established to assist with monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the PoA".

The Beijing+10 Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers, Senior Officials, Civil Society Organisations and Partners, held in New York on 27 February 2005, agreed that the Revised Draft Terms of Reference for the new Commonwealth Gender Reference Group mandated by the PoA 2005-2015 (henceforth to be called the Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group (CGPMG)), should be developed by a specially convened meeting (1 March 2005) of the members of the original Commonwealth Gender Reference Group and be sent to member countries for feedback within 30 days.

Terms of Reference for the Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group (CGPMG)

1. The responsibilities of the Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group are as follows:
 - (i) To provide advice to the Commonwealth Secretariat on the development of PoA indicators;
 - (ii) To identify the most appropriate monitoring and evaluation framework to: (a) meet the requirements of para. 4.19 of the PoA in harmonising the Secretariat's reporting on the PoA with CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action processes, the MDG goals and targets and UNSCR 1325 in order to reduce the burden of reporting on NWMs and to avoid duplication; and (b) ensure effective implementation of the

- Plan of Action;
- (iii) To provide advice to the Commonwealth Secretariat on the mid-term review of the PoA in 2010 and updates as required, as well as the next steps beyond the current tenure of the PoA which ends in 2015; and
 - (iv) To consider any issue that may be referred to it by Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs, related to the implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015, and work with the Secretariat, as necessary, to develop additional Terms of Reference, including membership, for the Commonwealth Working Group on UNSCR 1325.
2. The CGPMG will be a virtual group, but will meet in conjunction with meetings of Commonwealth Heads of NWMs in the wings of the CSW in New York, as required. The CGPMG will be co-ordinated by the Commonwealth Secretariat.
 3. The members of the CGPMG will initially comprise members of the original Commonwealth Gender Reference Group, as well as Australia:
 - **Africa:** The Gambia, Uganda, South Africa;
 - **Asia:** India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka;
 - **Caribbean/Canada:** Canada, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis;
 - **Europe:** Malta, United Kingdom;
 - **Pacific:** Australia, Fiji Islands, Kiribati, New Zealand;
 - **Civil Society:** Commonwealth Foundation and one civil society representative from each region (Africa, Asia, Caribbean/Canada, Europe and Pacific).
 4. Membership of the Commonwealth Gender PoA Monitoring Group will be rotated biennially, with one member per region rotating out after the first year. The decision as to which member from each region would be rotated out after the first year will be taken at the first meeting of the CPMG to be held in the wings of the 50th Session of the CSW in New York in February/March 2006. Volunteers for this rotation in advance of the meeting would be welcomed.

TOR OF ORIGINAL COMMONWEALTH GENDER REFERENCE GROUP

(This TOR of the original Commonwealth Gender Reference Group was published as Annex 1 in the *Report of the Commonwealth 7WAMM Preparatory Meeting of Heads of National Women's Machineries (NWMs), New York, 1-2 March 2003*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.)

Background

The Commonwealth 7WAMM Preparatory Meeting of Heads of National Women's Machineries, held in New York from 1-2 March 2003, established a Commonwealth Gender Reference Group with representatives from all Commonwealth regions to prepare for the 7th Commonwealth Women's/Gender Affairs Ministers Meeting (7WAMM) being held in the Fiji Islands from 30 May to 2 June 2004.

The Commonwealth Gender Reference Group emerged from the need for co-ordination in planning 7WAMM and developing a new Commonwealth Plan of Action. Member governments and civil society partners must be at the centre of the Commonwealth's consultative process.

Such a strategic and cost-effective consultative mechanism will maximise the use of electronic communications technologies, including e-list-serves and websites.

The following countries were nominated by those present or their representatives:

- Africa: The Gambia (West), Uganda (East), South Africa (Southern);
- Asia: India (as host country of 6WAMM, to be confirmed), Malaysia, Sri Lanka (to be confirmed);
- Caribbean/Canada: Canada, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis;
- Europe: Malta (to be confirmed), United Kingdom (to be confirmed);
- Pacific: Fiji Islands, Kiribati, New Zealand (to be confirmed)
- Civil society: Commonwealth Foundation and one civil society representative from each region (Africa, Asia, Caribbean/Canada, Europe, Pacific).

Terms of Reference for the Commonwealth Gender Reference Group

Each region will be represented by two/three countries' Heads of the National Women's Machineries. The regional representatives will make strategic recommendations to the Commonwealth Secretariat based on feedback from member governments and key partners in their respective regions. The Commonwealth Foundation will coordinate the regional civil society inputs into the consultative process. Regional agencies such as ECOWAS, CARICOM, NEPAD, Pacific Forum and SAARC will be consulted.

Members of the Commonwealth Gender Reference Group will be selected on a rotational basis at Women's/Gender Affairs Ministers Meetings.

The Commonwealth Gender Reference Group will be co-ordinated by the Commonwealth Secretariat. The Reference Group will play a consultative role in the following activities:

- Formulation of the 7WAMM agenda and format;
- Preparation of the Commonwealth Women's/Gender Ministers Reference Book, which will be drafted by Commonwealth Secretariat staff and a consultant based on questionnaire responses;
- Development of the new Commonwealth Plan of Action (2005-2015).

All exchanges will be by electronic means. It may be necessary for the members of the Commonwealth Gender Reference Group to meet in the wings of the 48th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in February/March 2004 in New York.

Immediate Follow-Up

NWMs of nominated countries not present at the New York meeting will need to confirm their representation of their respective regions. The Commonwealth Foundation will also advise regarding the civil society regional representatives and planned civil society-government consultations during May/June of 2003.

Annex VIII: Schedule of Commonwealth Side Events at UN Beijing+10 Review

Date	Time	Event Title	Venue
Sunday 27 Feb 2005	0830-1700 hrs	Commonwealth Secretariat Commonwealth Beijing+10 Meeting of Ministers, Senior Officials, Civil Society Organisations and Partners	Millennium UN Plaza Hotel One UN Plaza New York, NY 10017
Tuesday 1 March	1315-1445 hrs	Commonwealth Foundation Making Government-Civil Society Partnerships Work	Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium UN Headquarters
Thursday 3 March	1430-1630 hrs	Commonwealth Secretariat Commonwealth Expert Panel/ Book Launch <i>Chaired by Dr Rawwida Baksh, Head of Gender Section, Commonwealth Secretariat</i>	Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium UN Headquarters
Friday 4 March	0900-1000 hrs	IWTC Book Launch: Bagels and Books , featuring the Commonwealth Secretariat publication: <i>Gender and Human Rights in the Commonwealth: Some critical issues for action in the decade 2005-2015</i> <i>Dr Meena Shivdas, Advisor - Gender, Human Rights and HIV/AIDS, Commonwealth Secretariat</i>	International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC) 777 UN Plaza
Monday 7 March	1500-1800 hrs	Commonwealth Secretariat Presentation of the new Commonwealth Plan of Action (2005-2015) to the UN Beijing+10 Review <i>Ms Ann Keeling, Director, Social, Transformation Programmes Division, Commonwealth Secretariat</i>	General Assembly
Thursday 10 March	1500-1800 hrs	Commonwealth Secretariat Representation on UN/DAW High Level Panel on the Role of Regional and Intergovernmental Agencies in Promoting Gender Equality <i>Dr Rawwida Baksh, Head of Gender Section, Commonwealth Secretariat</i>	Conference Room 2 UN Headquarters

Annex IX: Commonwealth Secretariat Presentation to the UN High Level Plenary Session on the Review of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and the 2000 Outcome Document of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly

by Ms Ann Keeling, Director, Social Transformation Programmes Division

Madame Chairperson, last week on the eve of the Beijing+10 Review, the Commonwealth Ministers responsible for Women's Affairs met and affirmed their commitment to implementing a new Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015. They also strongly reaffirmed their commitment to the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2000 Beijing+5 Outcome Document. They stressed the importance of the full implementation of those agreements and of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Linking the Commonwealth 2005-2015 PoA with the 1995 BPfA and the 2000 Beijing+5 Outcome Document

Madame Chairperson, as the largest intergovernmental organisation within the UN system – with 53 member countries and 1.7 billion people – the Commonwealth is well placed to work for gender equality.

The Commonwealth Secretariat works closely with national women's machineries, key government ministries, civil society, international agencies and other key stakeholders in the promotion of gender equality.

Our new Commonwealth Plan of Action builds on past achievements and responds to challenges impacting on women that have emerged and deepened since Beijing. The Plan sets out a Commonwealth vision for the next decade and identifies four critical areas for action. These are:

- I Gender, Democracy, Peace and Conflict;
- II Gender, Human Rights and Law;
- III Gender, Poverty Eradication and Economic Empowerment;
- IV Gender and HIV/AIDS.

The Plan reinforces our commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), recognising that women's rights are essential for the broader development vision in the Millennium Declaration that the MDGs represent. In addition, the Plan recognises that women's participation in democracy and peace processes is crucial for the achievement of both security and sustainable development.

Country experience

Madam Chairperson, our new Plan is not our first Plan for Gender Equality, and much progress has been recorded at country level against our previous plans. I will highlight just two of many notable examples:

On women's political empowerment: women now represent 47 per cent of the Cabinet in South Africa. Similarly, constitutional amendments in India have resulted in over 500,000 women being elected to local government throughout the country. In Uganda, constitutional reform has established one woman Member of Parliament per district and one third of local council positions for women.

The Commonwealth Secretariat was the first intergovernmental organisation to promote gender-responsive budgets (GRBs). It launched its Gender Budget Initiative in 1995 and has played a pioneering role in the production of tools, methodologies and capacity-building materials. Commonwealth experience – primarily that of Australia and South Africa – has been the basis for capacity building in gender-responsive budgeting in many countries of the world.

Gender mainstreaming in the Commonwealth Secretariat

Madam Chairperson, since we in the Commonwealth Secretariat promote gender equality in our member countries, we have followed our own advice and adopted a gender mainstreaming approach in our own organisation. Shortly after Beijing, the Secretariat's governance structure, strategic plan, human resource management and programme delivery were reviewed. Notable initiatives include:

- Establishment in 1997 of a Steering Committee to monitor our Equal Employment Opportunities Policy (EOPP);
- Adoption of a 33 per cent target for women in senior positions as a first step towards gender parity. By July 2003, the target was met for posts at the professional level.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Madam Chairperson, ten years ago at the Beijing Conference, UN members agreed on the Platform for Action designed to achieve gender equality. Much progress has been made but millions of women and girls remain in dire poverty with very restricted rights and life chances. Our new Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality builds on the Beijing Platform and provides a vision for the next decade – that vision sees women and men as equal partners in our common future.

Annex X: Commonwealth Secretariat Presentation at the UNDAW High Level Panel on the Role of Regional and Intergovernmental Agencies in Promoting Gender Equality

by Dr Rawwida Baksh, Head of Gender Section, Social Transformation Programmes Division

I bring you warm greetings from the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Hon Don McKinnon and the Commonwealth Secretariat. I am deeply honoured to participate in this panel on the role of regional and intergovernmental organisations in promoting gender equality, to mark the 10-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action.

I would like to thank Ms Rachel Mayanja, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women; Ms Carolyn Hannan, Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women; Ms Kyung-wha-Kang, Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women and Bureau Members for organising this high-level panel and for their invitation.

The Commonwealth Secretariat is a voluntary organisation of 53 independent states (nearly one third of UN member countries), 32 of which are small states. Commonwealth Heads of Government established the Secretariat 40 years ago in 1965. Its guiding principles are the promotion of international co-operation, peace, democracy and good governance; respect for human rights and the rule of law; gender equality; and poverty eradication through economic and social development. Common values and similar political, constitutional, legal, administrative, educational and other systems facilitate consensus building and the sharing of expertise, experiences and resources.

The Commonwealth's 1995 Plan of Action on Gender and Development, which was presented to the Beijing Conference, made the shift from women in development to a gender mainstreaming approach. In the post-Beijing decade, the Secretariat developed the Gender Management System (or GMS) as a system-wide, multisectoral framework for gender mainstreaming. The Secretariat also recognises that gender differences intersect with other factors of diversity, such as class, caste, race, ethnicity, age, religion, disability and sexual preference. The Secretary-General has stated that, "issues of peace, governance, democracy and socio-economic development cannot be separated from those of gender equality".

How does the Secretariat work on gender equality issues?

- We play an ABC role as advocate, broker and catalyst.
- We act as an advocate to Heads of Government to build political will and governmental commitment, and to ensure resource allocation for gender equality.
- We provide policy advice, technical assistance, capacity building and gender-aware tools and methodologies to mainstream government ministries, to facilitate policy-making, planning and programme delivery. These include Ministries of Finance, Development Planning, Legal and Constitutional Affairs, Trade and Industry, Health, Education and Youth.
- We play a catalytic role in developing innovative approaches to gender mainstreaming, for example, our work on gender-responsive budgets; an integrated approach to violence against women; a multisectoral approach to HIV/AIDS; gender, poverty eradication and the Millennium Development Goals; women and men in partnership for post-conflict reconstruction.
- We broker partnerships for promoting gender equality with Commonwealth associations;

multilateral, regional and bilateral agencies; civil society organisations; the private sector; youth organisations and networks; academic institutions; the media.

- We facilitate annual meetings of national women's machineries and triennial meetings of Women's/Gender Affairs Ministers, who shape the gender equality mandate of the Secretariat.

Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs, building on past initiatives and strategies, and taking into account emerging global issues and developments, developed a new Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality for the 2005-2015 decade, which was launched by Ministers on the eve of the Beijing+10 Review here in New York and presented to the CSW High Level Plenary earlier this week.

The Commonwealth PoA focuses on four main areas to advance gender equality:

- 1 Democracy, Peace and Conflict;
- 2 Human Rights and Law;
- 3 Poverty Eradication and Economic Empowerment; and
- 4 HIV/AIDS.

Recognising the Commonwealth's uneven progress in increasing women's political representation, the Plan urges member countries to achieve the 30 per cent target by 2015. And it encourages countries who have already achieved the target to strive towards parity.

Country examples of good practice include South Africa, where women represent 47 per cent of the Cabinet. Also, India's 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments reserved one-third of all local government seats for women, which has resulted in over 500,000 women being elected to the Panchayat Raj throughout the country.

In the area of peace and conflict, our integrated approach involves women, men and young persons in promoting a culture of peace, resolving conflicts, undertaking gender-aware post-conflict reconstruction and increasing women's representation in the political process. The PoA calls on member countries to monitor the implementation of UNSCR 1325, recognising that there can be no development without peace.

On gender-based violence, some notable examples of Commonwealth country initiatives include Canada's introduction of the Family Violence Initiative, the establishment of domestic violence courts in Seychelles and Singapore, and the introduction of domestic violence legislation in some 11 Caribbean countries. Ghana has successfully passed the Children's Act and amended the Criminal Code in areas dealing with rape and defilement.

In the Commonwealth, as internationally, eradicating poverty has been at the heart of the development agenda. One third of the estimated 1.2 billion people who live on less than \$1 a day are Commonwealth citizens, as are 64 per cent of the 2.8 billion people who live on under US\$2 a day. I wish to emphasise that over two-thirds of these are women.

The Secretariat was the first intergovernmental organisation to promote gender-responsive budgets. It launched the Gender Budget Initiative in 1995 and has played a pioneering role in developing tools and training materials, which are being used in some 50 countries globally.

The Secretariat also recognises that while globalisation and trade liberalisation offer new oppor-

tunities for economic growth, they also result in the loss of livelihoods. Many countries, particularly small states, have a limited capacity to formulate trade policies and to be effective in trade negotiations. The Secretariat has responded by producing leading work on *Gender Mainstreaming in the Multilateral Trading System*. We also published *Chains of Fortune: Linking Women Producers and Workers with Global Markets*, case studies showing how women can in fact benefit from the opportunities offered by globalisation.

You may well ask, what have we done to mainstream gender within the Secretariat itself?

Shortly after the Beijing conference, we reviewed the Secretariat's governance structures, policy-making, strategic planning, budget allocation, human resource management and programme delivery.

We followed this up in a number of ways:

- We set up a Gender Steering Committee comprised of Directors and chaired by the Secretary-General, which meets bi-annually to review Secretariat progress.
- We appointed two Gender Focal Points in each division to co-ordinate gender mainstreaming in all programmes and projects.
- We put in place an Equal Employment Opportunities Policy.
- We promoted the 30 per cent target in recruitment at the diplomatic and professional levels, which has been achieved.
- The Secretary-General appoints female Special Envoys for his good offices and peace interventions. In addition, the Political Affairs Division is working towards gender parity in Commonwealth Observer Groups sent out to monitor elections.
- We have strengthened the Gender Section to lead the Secretariat's Gender Equality Programme, while we have simultaneously mainstreamed gender into the other 15 programmes in the Secretariat's current Four-Year Strategic Plan.

Despite the successes achieved by member countries and the Secretariat, a number of gaps, challenges and constraints remain, which need to be addressed in the next decade:

- Countries need to domesticate the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) into national legislation;
- We need to re-commit ourselves to strengthening national machineries, including increasing their resources and putting in place mechanisms for implementation.
- There is an urgent need for sex-disaggregated statistics and gender-sensitive indicators.
- We need to strengthen our partnerships in order to maximise our efforts and resources.
- We need to review gender mainstreaming as an approach to advancing gender equality. Someone said at DAWN's recent 20th anniversary celebrations in Cape Town that gender mainstreaming was the step-sister of gender justice. Has this in fact been our experience?

In conclusion, the new Plan of Action for Gender Equality provides the framework within which the Commonwealth will advance its commitment to gender equality in 2005-2015. As Commonwealth Secretary-General, Hon Don McKinnon has stated, "the principles of gender equality and inclusion are the fundamental values on which every attempt at democracy and development must be based".

I thank you and I would welcome further discussion.

Annex XI: Participants' List

ANGUILLA

Dr Lana Connor HOYOUNG
Ministry of Human Rights and Gender

ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

The Hon Dr Jacqui C QUINN-LEANDRO
Minister, Ministry of Labour, Public
Administration and Empowerment

Ms Sheila ROSEAU
Executive Director, Directorate of Gender Affairs

AUSTRALIA

Senator the Hon Kay PATTERSON
Minister for Family and Community Services and
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women's
Issues

Ms Kerry FLANAGAN
Group Manager, Office for Women

Ms Gabrielle BURRELL
Delegate

THE BAHAMAS

Ms Phedra Monique RAHMING
First Assistant Secretary and Officer in Charge of
the Bureau of Women's Affairs

Ms Nicole ARCHER
Delegate

BANGLADESH

The Hon Begum Khurshid Zahan HAQUE
Minister, Ministry of Women and Children's
Affairs

H.E. Dr Iftekhar Ahmed CHOWDHURY
Ambassador/Permanent Representative to the UN

Ms Ishrat Jahan AHMED
First Secretary, Permanent Mission to the UN

Mr Md Abdul ALIM
First Secretary, Permanent Mission to the UN

Mr Qazi Monowarul HOQ
Secretary, Ministry of Social Welfare

Mr Ferdous Ara BEGUM
Additional Secretary, Ministry of Establishment

Mr Md Feroz Salah UDDIN
Delegate

BARBADOS

The Hon Hamilton LASHLEY
Minister, Ministry of Social Transformation

Ms Sheila STUART
Director, Bureau of Gender Affairs, Ministry of
Social Transformation

BELIZE

The Hon Sylvia FLORES
Minister, Ministry of Human Development

Ms Anita ZETINA
Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Human
Development

Ms Dina SHOMAN
Delegate

BOTSWANA

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