

**Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements
6 April 2005, Nairobi**

SUMMARY RECORD

The Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements met in the wings of the UN Habitat Governing Council on the afternoon of 6 April 2005. It was attended by representatives from 15 member states (Barbados, Canada, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Maldives, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia) and representatives of the following organisations: Commonwealth Association of Planners, Commonwealth Association of Surveying and Land Economy, Commonwealth Human Ecology Council, Commonwealth Local Government Forum, Commonwealth Secretariat, Development Initiatives Network (Nigeria), Homeless International, Overcomers Visionary Faith Centre (Kenya), Shack/Slum Dwellers International, Spanfield Peace Education Programmers (Kenya), Tema Foundation (Kenya), United Nations Association Australia, UN-Habitat, and World Youth Alliance Africa. The meeting was chaired by Zambia's Minister of Local Government and Housing, Hon. Sylvia Masebo, M.P. A list of participants is provided as an annex to this report.

Agenda Item 1: Opening Remarks

Dr Indrajit Coomaraswamy, Director, Economic Affairs Division, Commonwealth Secretariat, welcomed delegates to the meeting and invited the Chair of the CCGHS, Zambia's Minister of Local Government and Housing, the Hon. Sylvia Masebo, M.P., to open the meeting. The Minister noted that the CCGHS was established to facilitate implementation of the Habitat Agenda in the Commonwealth with special focus on improving the quality of life through the provision of basic services and the promotion of good governance and security of tenure. She said it has the potential to become a useful international mechanism to assist member states to effectively implement the Millennium Development Goals, and called on all to rise up to that challenge.

Agenda Item 2: Provisional Agenda

The provisional agenda CCGHS(04)2(Admin) was adopted with the following amendments:

- Discussion of the ComHabitat work plan taken as Agenda Item 4;
- Discussion on challenges in the provision of water and sanitation taken as Agenda Item 5; and
- Election of the new Chair taken as the last item.

A revised agenda was distributed to delegates.

Agenda Item 3: Minutes of the Previous Meetings

Summary records for the fifth formal session of the CCGHS (Nairobi, 7 and 8 May 2003) and the informal meeting of the CCGHS (Barcelona, 14 September 2004), as presented in document CCGHS(05)1), were agreed without comment.

World Urban Forum in Vancouver in 2006

The meeting paused at this point to welcome the UN Habitat Executive Director, Dr. Anna Tibaijuka, who briefly attended the meeting. In her remarks to the Group, Dr. Tibaijuka welcomed the role of ComHabitat as a partner in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

The meeting then heard a contribution by Canada's Minister of Labour and Housing, the Hon. Joe Fontana, on plans for the next World Urban Forum in Vancouver in June 2006. He said he was impressed by ComHabitat's plans for research on urban finance and that he had seen some innovative examples during his visit to Kenya. The Minister said that shelter is the foundation of human dignity and that housing and shelter development is about building people's lives. He invited the participation of Commonwealth governments in the World Urban Forum in Vancouver in June 2006, to examine practical ways in which the MDGs could be achieved through putting housing and shelter development at the centre of efforts. He also urged governments to have delegations that are as inclusive as possible of Habitat Agenda partners, particularly those groups directly affected by shelter development programmes. Minister Fontana said that the challenges were known, and that it was necessary to seek collective solutions to the challenges, examining successful practices and approaches that have not been as successful, to help people gain the know-how of creating sustainable cities and neighbourhoods, taking as holistic an approach as possible. The purpose of Vancouver was not just to have a convention, but to engage in dialogue and demonstration projects between now and June 2006, and to learn from networking. He suggested that Commonwealth Ministers may wish to consider holding their next meeting in Vancouver.

In their discussion, delegates sought guidance on the facilitation of visas for those attending the Forum and emphasised the need for an early start on national preparations for WUF to give time to ensuring the most inclusive of delegations. One delegate noted that while participation by Ministers from developed countries had been substantial in Barcelona, fewer Ministers from developing countries had been able to attend and this was a matter of some concern. The Canadian Minister acknowledged the need for both developed and developing countries to participate equally in Vancouver and that the Forum as a whole, and not just national delegations, needs to be as inclusive as possible. He said that people's homes and university campuses would be made available for accommodation to reduce the costs of participation in the Forum.

Agenda Item 4: ComHabitat Work

Kim Mullard, ComHabitat Programme Co-ordinator, updated the CCGHS on ComHabitat's work since its last formal meeting in 2003, outlined in paper CCGHS(05)3. She said the CCGHS was at the heart of the ComHabitat mechanism and that it had always worked closely with other groups – something which made ComHabitat unique. The evolution of the Work Plan had been based on priorities set by the CCGHS in May 2003, the Habitat Agenda, and the Commonwealth Input to Istanbul+5. Key aspects influencing the

Plan were the concern not to duplicate other efforts; a limited budget and tight deadlines; and the wider context of the human settlements agenda, such as work towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and implementation of the outcomes of international conferences. The Work Plan elements, an expenditure report, and recent activities were presented, in the following areas:

- *information sharing and research*, including research on urban development finance and progress in implementing the Habitat Agenda;
- *networking and advocacy*, including networking events to share experiences, such as the event held during the Barcelona World Urban Forum. Kim Mullard sought suggestions on organisations that could be involved in ComHabitat and included on its database of contacts;
- *the CCGHS process* and meetings of the wider ComHabitat mechanism; and
- *the development of internal capacity*. ComHabitat plans to develop a communications strategy (including an e-newsletter; research dissemination and web site development) with an emphasis on making information accessible to partners. Developing the work programme and securing new resources is another important element of internal capacity.

During 2005, ComHabitat's work could feed in to the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting (CFMM) report on implementation of the MDGs, focusing on the inclusion of urban poverty and housing issues in PRSPs. A one-page summary ComHabitat Research Update was circulated, which outlined key issues emerging from the research to date. In the next year, ComHabitat will complete a number of country studies and focus on networking and advocacy activities. Kim Mullard concluded with a question to the CCGHS on what ComHabitat's direction and broad priorities should be for the coming year.

The Chair sought delegates' views on the Work Plan.

A number of delegates recognised the valuable role that civil society organisations have to play in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, but expressed their concern about the process by which civil society is sometimes involved, particularly at the international level. One delegate said that many international organisations were going directly to civil society organisations and that national groups did not work as a team. Two delegates highlighted experiences in Barcelona, where they felt that some civil society organisations had worked at cross purposes to their governments and given inaccurate information to the Forum. They emphasised the need for governments and civil society to work in partnership before going in to international meetings. A representative of civil society said that the women's caucus at the UN Habitat Governing Council was examining how NGOs could be most effective in supporting governments, in a network and where there was trust. The caucus had concerns about governments approving the budgets that NGOs receive from international organisations. Some delegates commented on the role of legal frameworks and other approaches to regulating inappropriate activities. Others outlined mechanisms that countries are using to facilitate partnership between NGOs and governments. The Chair noted the importance of an effective process for involving civil society in the World Urban Forum. In this context, she requested that the Canadian government include the need for inclusive delegations in its invitation to governments to attend the Forum. In this way, governments could start to facilitate their own processes at the national level.

One delegate expressed concern at the amount of money being expended on research and advocacy under the Work Plan, while there was so much need for more practical measures in countries and funding for housing and services. Another delegate supported this position, saying that implementation of the Habitat Agenda was still lacking and that practical measures were needed. Kim Mullard noted that the research element of the work plan is intended to lead directly to practical action and solutions: it would not be a matter of having a research report available on a shelf. The process of the research is as important as the outputs. Homeless International had practical experience in this area where its research on regulatory frameworks and existing urban financing mechanisms had led to the development of the Community-led Infrastructure Finance Facility (CLIFF). She said that networking events of the kind organised in Barcelona will also bring together organisations that were achieving things on the ground to promote practical action.

Decisions:

- Participants agreed the work plan, including the current structure. The structure could be reviewed in about 2 years, to examine how it was working in practice.
- The ComHabitat Secretariat should give thought to how best it could liaise with governments on the inclusion of stakeholders in its networking events, for example if one is held in Vancouver in June 2006.
- In the light of the discussions on a partnership approach between governments and civil society, particularly in the context of international discussions, the Management Group should agree a framework for networking and co-ordinating a partnership approach in the Commonwealth, to achieve ComHabitat's objectives.

Agenda Item 5: Challenges in the provision of water, sanitation and human settlements: the achievement of the Habitat Agenda and the MDGs through partnerships

Dr Peter de Groot introduced this item and summarised the background paper, CCGHS(05)2 entitled '*Effective Partnerships in the areas of Human Settlements, Water, and Sanitation*'. The Chair suggested that the discussion focus on issues for the thirteenth session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and the forthcoming MDG review.

A developing country delegate raised concerns about the need to expand the budgetary base of UN Habitat, saying that as the lead agency on human settlement issues UN Habitat needs to be supported. He requested the Chair to talk to donor Commonwealth countries in the subsequent few days to seek their support in expanding the financial base of UN Habitat and explore how human settlements could be brought centre stage in the development agenda. A number of delegates called for human settlements to be placed centre stage and that issues such as water, sanitation, waste management and others need to be addressed in an integrated and holistic way in the framework of human settlements. One delegate, supported by others, said the issue should be raised at CHOGM. Kim Mullard suggested that it could also be raised in the context of the CFMM discussion on PRSPs. One delegate, supported by others, noted that an issue in meeting agreed commitments was that of

financing. Since debt servicing takes a great deal of resources, debt cancellation was important in the implementation of MDGs.

Two delegates indicated that they had experienced problems in receiving the papers for the meeting in time. The Chair noted their concerns and outlined the mechanisms for delivering papers to Ministers. Kim Mullard also asked governments to indicate to ComHabitat who their key point-of-contact would be, so material could be sent directly to capitals.

Decisions:

- To explore how the perspectives of the CCGHS on placing human settlements at the centre of the development agenda and ComHabitat's research into progress on human settlement goals, might be fed in to deliberations Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting on progress in implementing the MDGs (September 2005) and CHOGM in November 2006.
- The Group mandated the Chair to deliver a statement to CSD-13 conveying priorities that this meeting had identified, as follows: the need for an integrated debate on issues such as water, sanitation and waste management, that puts human settlements at the heart of the development agenda; and the need for increased finance to support implementation of international goals. In this context, debt cancellation is an important issue.
- Some members of the meeting urged the Chair to liaise further this week with donor countries in the Commonwealth to convey their concerns with respect to the need to expand the budgetary base of UN Habitat.
- The Commonwealth Secretariat and ComHabitat Secretariat noted the problems that some delegations had experienced in receiving documents for the session. They will work to identify further measures to help overcome these problems.

Agenda Item 6: Any Other Business

There was no other business.

Agenda Item 7: Election of Chair

The Chair noted that in 2001, the CCGHS (Nairobi, 10 February 2001) agreed that the Chair of the CCGHS would rotate every two years on a regional basis. The previous Chair was from Asia (Bangladesh) and the current Chair is from Africa (Zambia). In the light of this, the Commonwealth Secretary-General wrote to Caribbean member states on 30th December 2004 asking them to consult with one another to propose a nomination at the current session of the CCGHS. Consultations on this issue were conducted through CARICOM and the region had proposed as CCGHS Chair, the Hon Elizabeth Thompson-McDowald, M.P., Barbados' Minister of Housing, Lands and Environment.

The meeting elected Minister Thompson-McDowald by acclamation. Taking the Chair, the Minister expressed her delight to be elected as Chair of the CCGHS and gave her

assurance that its views and concerns would be represented fairly. The Minister committed herself to working hard on behalf of the Group.

Close of the Meeting

The Chair brought the meeting to a close, thanking representatives for their contributions.

Dr Indrajit Coomaraswamy, on behalf of colleagues at the Commonwealth Secretariat and Homeless International, the Secretariat for ComHabitat, assured the Group that everything that had been raised at the meeting would be taken on board. He congratulated the Minister Thompson-McDowald on her election as Chair of the CCGHS and paid particularly warm tribute to the work of Minister Masebo, thanking her for her support of ComHabitat during a time when it had experienced some growing pains. He said that without her personal commitment during this period, ComHabitat would not have been able to achieve the position it was in today.

The Representative of Uganda also paid tribute to the work of the outgoing Chair and the meeting showed its appreciation by acclamation.

Meeting with the Canadian Delegation

In follow-up to Agenda Item 5, Minister Masebo met with a member of the Canadian delegation to the UN Habitat Governing Council, Mr John Black, on Thursday 7th April 2005. Minister Masebo raised the concerns that developing country delegations had expressed at the CCGHS meeting with respect to expanding the financial base of UN Habitat. Mr Black noted that Canada was making a significant contribution of 15 million Canadian dollars through the Canada Fund for Africa to UN-HABITAT's Water and Sanitation Trust Fund to improve water and sanitation in African cities, provide sanitation and hygiene education in schools, and demonstrate innovative approaches to providing affordable services to urban poor. Indeed, Canada was the largest single contributor to the Trust Fund. Canada was also hosting the 2006 World Urban Forum in Vancouver. Minister Masebo noted this generous support to the work of UN Habitat and implementation of the Habitat Agenda. She said that the CCGHS had noted that most funding was currently allocated to water and sanitation activities, but said that financing also needs to go hand-in-hand with the human settlements agenda. Mr Black informed the Minister of Canada's plans to increase its overall development aid funding over the next year, saying that Canada's Minister for International Cooperation would be considering the allocation of these funds. He undertook to explore ways in which Canada might liaise further with other donor countries in the Commonwealth to examine how the human settlements agenda could be more closely integrated with that on water and sanitation. The Minister again urged the Canadian government to draft its invitation to the World Urban Forum in such a way as to facilitate governments' role in bringing together inclusive delegations.

Statement by the Outgoing Chair to the 13th Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development

As requested by the CCGHS under Agenda Item 5, outgoing CCGHS Chair, Hon. Sylvia Masebo, M.P., delivered a statement to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development on Thursday, 21st April 2005. The text is provided as an annex to this report.

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

Delivered by Hon Sylvia Masebo, M.P.

Minister of Local Government and Housing, Zambia and outgoing Chairperson of the
Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements

to the Thirteen Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development
New York, 21 April 2005

Chair, Heads of Delegations, Distinguished Delegates,

- I recently had the pleasure of chairing the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements, which was held on 6th April in the wings of the 20th Session of the Governing Council of UN Habitat in Nairobi.
- The CCGHS is a Commonwealth initiative to assist member countries to implement the Habitat Agenda and to attain the Millennium Development Goals.
- At its last session in Nairobi, the Group discussed the priorities it would like to see addressed by this session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and the forthcoming review of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

The members asked me to convey key points of their deliberations.

- Firstly, we recognised that shelter is the foundation of human dignity and that housing and human settlements development is about building people's lives. There can be no sustainable development without sustainable urbanisation. Adequate shelter, with secure tenure and access to essential services, is deeply connected to achievement of the millennium development goals, including those on poverty, education, health, water and sanitation. Something like one in six people live in what amounts to health- and life-threatening environments. In order to make progress, we need an integrated, holistic, debate on these issues that puts human settlements at the very heart of the development agenda;

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

Thank you.