

COMMUNIQUÉ

7TH Meeting of the Commonwealth Youth Ministers Colombo, Sri Lanka

1. Commonwealth Youth Ministers met in Colombo, Sri Lanka from April 27 to 30, 2008 under the Chairmanship of the Honourable Pavithra Wanniarachchi, Youth Affairs Minister. Youth representatives formed part of the official delegations.

2. His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa President of Sri Lanka opened the meeting and acknowledged the importance of youth in national development. Commonwealth Secretary General, His Excellency Kamallesh Sharma reiterated the Commonwealth's priority commitment to placing young people at the centre of sustainable development.

Youth and peace building

3. The theme of 7CYMM, "*Youth and Peace building*" offered a unique opportunity for Ministers to consider emerging issues related to youth development, and in particular the linkages between the empowerment of young people, their inclusion in society and decision-making processes, and their contribution to peace-building, social development and transformation.

4. Ministers benefited from a keynote paper, which discussed, among other things that Ministers have the power to ensure that the voices of young people are heard in policy choices, budgeting and the building of peace. The keynote paper called for more money to be dedicated to peace-building.

5. Ministers also benefited from regional case studies, which outlined a clear role for young people in building peace, and in mitigating the recourse to conflict, and crime and violence. In this regard, CYMM endorsed the role of participatory learning and action techniques in building the capacity of young people and their networks to conduct research and development work for effective peace-building. Ministers also endorsed region-specific programme interventions on conflict management and peace-building in the Africa, Asia, Caribbean and Pacific regions of the Commonwealth and noted with appreciation the expressed commitment of the Commonwealth Youth Caucus (CYC) to lead peace building with young people across the Commonwealth and at all levels of governance.

6. 7 CYMM also endorsed the recommendation of the CYC for the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) to develop specific modules on peace-building, as well as constructively empower young people to be effective in their role as peace builders and acknowledged the Caucus's appreciation of CYMM and CYP for their role in giving young people a platform for initiating dialogues, for voicing their concerns, building consensus and addressing issues affecting young people.

7. CYMM considered a range of factors that will strengthen linkages and broaden the dialogue and engagement on peace building, including Government attention to macro-institutional frameworks; to the institutional and social contexts that lead youth to violence; the role of faith based organizations and enhanced family and kinship networks; and the engagement of a wide cross section of stakeholders, and recommended appropriate attention at all levels, recommending, further that initiatives on peace building take into account Commonwealth work on respect and understanding, including their intergenerational aspects.

Report of the Commonwealth Secretary-General: CYP Present and Future Strategies

8. Ministers received with appreciation the Report of the Commonwealth Secretary-General HE Kamlesh Sharma on CYP. His Report focused on CYP's progress on strategic programming, and its vision and commitment to youth programmes. He referred to the broad recommendations of the 2007 CHOGM '**Munyonyo Statement on Respect and Understanding**' and the '**Kampala Declaration on Transforming Societies to Achieve political, Economic and Human Development**' and their potential impact on young people, while highlighting the role of government in mitigating conflict, and restoring and maintaining peace.

9. The Secretary General made reference to the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (PAYE) as a tool for mainstreaming youth development and the specific objectives set out in the document in relation to peace-building that can guide Government action. He observed that the PAYE will be the main reference tool for CYP in its implementation of future strategies on youth mainstreaming in response to the CHOGM 2007 mandates and commitments made in the Kampala Declaration.

Revised CYP Strategic Plan

10. 7CYMM noted the amendments to the 2006-2008 Strategic Plan post-6CYMM, the commitment made by CYP to introduce performance measurement in implementing its programmes and the PAYE, and CYP's new programme focus on evidence-based youth development in order to contribute to building a credible body of knowledge in youth work.

PAYE

11. Ministers noted that the PAYE was launched at varying levels across the Commonwealth and that support to Member States for the implementation of the PAYE is integrated into CYP's strategic programming. Ministers further noted that several member States have incorporated the document into their national strategic plans and youth policies. CYMM agreed that government implementation of the document would be more effective if this is based on national priorities represented by the relevant PAYE action points. 7CYMM endorsed the PAYE as the Commonwealth model strategic plan for mainstreaming youth development and agreed that the PAYE should be actively marketed.

CYP Programme Report

12. CYMM noted the report of CYP's work in its 3 strategic programme areas relating to Youth Enterprise and Sustainable Livelihoods, Governance and Youth Networks and Youth Work Education and Training and endorsed its work. CYMM also noted with appreciation the experiences of individual Governments and their progress in youth enterprise and self-employment generation; in reviewing national youth policies and developing action plans; in capacity building across a range of empowering competencies for youth work and young people; and in partnership arrangements on broad-based youth development.

Governance and Development Networks

13. Arising out of the recommendations of the Regional Advisory Board (RAB) to the CYMM on CYP programming in the area of governance, Ministers noted the need for greater monitoring, evaluation and reporting on progress made in youth development. The Meeting agreed on the need for CYP to develop a model to guide the establishment of National Youth Councils and agreed that consideration should be given to creating more opportunities for effective participation and inclusion of young people in decision-making.

Youth enterprise and sustainable livelihoods (YESL)

14. CYMM agreed that CYP and Governments should accelerate work to develop and implement measures to promote the economic enfranchisement of young people. Attention should be given, wherever applicable, to making available an enhanced range of life coping and parenting skills; greater opportunities to develop young peoples' creativity and artistic expression; the needs of marginalised youth; opportunities for business generation and self-employment in the tourism, agriculture and environment sectors; as well as expanding entrepreneurship training to include global trading and market opportunities. 7CYMM also endorsed the platform of youth exchanges to give young people the opportunity to gain wider appreciation of cross-Commonwealth networks and development.

15. Ministers recommended that consideration be given to more dialogue with relevant state sectors to provide opportunities for rehabilitation and restorative justice for youth in conflict.

Youth Work Education and Training

16. CYMM noted the progress of CYP training in the certificate and diploma courses. Ministers also noted progress made towards a degree programme in youth development work and the recognition and accreditation of the diploma programme in Commonwealth Countries. 7CYMM also noted the efforts being made in some countries to establish associations of professional youth workers and the need for appropriate levels of stakeholder participation in such organisations.

17. CYMM recommended that special attention be paid to developing short courses to meet the needs of youth workers at basic entry-levels and to exploring means in tandem with Governments, to translate training modules into local languages to benefit a wider target of

young people and youth workers. CYMM urged CYP to continue its pioneering work in youth education and training.

Pan-Commonwealth Youth Caucus

18. Ministers noted the report of the Commonwealth Youth Caucus for the period 2006-2008, which highlighted achievements of the Caucus members working in youth advocacy, leadership, capacity building and youth engagement at community, national, regional and international levels. CYMM noted that the RYC Handbook was finalized after wide spread consultation and is the *de facto* RYC Constitution. CYMM also noted that the Report of the Caucus Chairman mentioned ongoing challenges faced by Caucus members in initiating projects at community levels in the absence of adequate financial and administrative support. CYMM further noted that communication challenges faced by the Caucus would be addressed in the upcoming term by populating and using the website created for the purpose.

19. CYMM also noted the CYC's renewed appeal to Governments to appoint RYC representatives for a term of at least two (2) years and to support their active participation in all governance meetings of the CYP. The Meeting further noted the call for CYP and Governments to more effectively use the skills and resources of former RYC representatives.

20. The CYMM expressed appreciation to the outgoing Pan-Commonwealth Chair Mr. Mobafa Baker, and welcomed incoming Chair Mr. Matthew Albert and Deputy Chair Ms. Ebonie Fifita.

Youth Mainstreaming

21. Ministers endorsed the importance of mainstreaming for the systematic integration of youth development into the work of all relevant stakeholders and recognised the need for appropriate resource allocations for youth development programmes to be made across all sectors.

22. Ministers agreed to consider and implement practical approaches to mainstreaming using opportunities available to engage with a range of stakeholders including the private sector, NGOs and especially young people. In this regard, Ministers committed to the establishment of national mainstreaming taskforces in respective countries, where appropriate, with focal points to be drawn from national line ministries.

23. Ministers recommended that CYP accelerate the implementation of CYMM resolutions and commitments in the CYP Strategic Plan towards youth mainstreaming and that CYP establish indicators to guide member countries initiatives on mainstreaming.

Youth Development Index

24. The CYMM discussed the importance of the YDI in providing benchmarks to support Governments and youth development partners in assessing the impact of youth mainstreaming and development. Ministers commended the progress made by the Government of Malaysia in

developing a national Youth Index, which is currently is being used to measure the changes in the status of youth development at human, institutional and national levels, with indices related to quality of life, life style and well being of young people.

25. In underscoring the relevance of the YDI, CYMM agreed that CYP should pursue partnerships with Commonwealth institutions such as the Malaysia University to accelerate design of the tool. 7CYMM further agreed that the rationale for the selection and weighing of indices will be customized based on national youth development priorities. The PAYE Action Points and Indicators should be referenced to initiate research for the YDI beginning at the grassroots level, with the full engagement of young people and their networks. CYMM also acknowledged the importance of quantitative and qualitative measurement in respect of the YDI.

Centres of Excellence

26. Ministers received progress reports on the action taken since 6CYMM to establish Centres of Excellence (CoE) in youth work. 7 CYMM noted with appreciation the Report of the CYP Asia Centre on the progress made with the Government of India and the Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD) on the CoE in the field of youth & local self-governance.

27. CYMM also noted the concept papers presented by the regional centres for Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific on the establishment of CoE in the fields of Youth and HIV and AIDS; Youth Work Education and Training; and Youth-led Research, Knowledge- gathering and Information-sharing respectively. CYMM noted with appreciation that all proposals provided for the full engagement of young people in the realization of the goals of the Centres. In terms of the Africa Centre and CYP's work on HIV and AIDS, the CYMM agreed on the need to link the fight against HIV and AIDS through the creation of sustainable livelihoods.

28. CYMM endorsed the role of all CoEs in the promotion of excellence in capacity building, research, methodologies and strategic partnerships for use at the Pan-Commonwealth level and in terms of their tremendous potential as an investment in youth. In this regard the linkages for giving young people access to skills that are often denied them; for strengthening the capacity of the RYC members to become true partners in development; for introducing programmes for young professionals to gain experience in youth development were duly noted.

29. 7CYMM reiterated the importance of the YDI in the work of CoEs as a scientific tool that will bolster research-based programme development and implementation and recommended that CYP develop cogent marketing strategies for attracting strategic and financial partners while continuing to engage respective member governments.

Role of Sport in Youth Development

30. Ministers received the report of the Commonwealth Advisory Body on Sports (CABOS), which highlighted several initiatives to mainstream sports. The Report spoke of efforts to integrate sports more effectively at varying levels of the Commonwealth. Several delegations reported on their work at national levels in creating synergies with sport and youth development.

31. 7CYMM acknowledged sport as a vital strategy for youth development and for peace-building and re-affirmed the importance of the strategic goals of the PAYE that speak to the role of sport in promoting youth health and well-being, positive role models, developing values and fostering young people's self-esteem.

32. CYMM also noted the agreement of the CABOS representatives to include young people on the CABOS.

Mid-Term Review

33. 7CYMM endorsed the shift of the CYP strategic planning cycle from a three year to a four year strategic planning in alignment with the Secretariat cycle and agreed to the establishment of a mid-term ministerial review team (MTR) to look at CYP progress and financial performance. The role and scope of proposed MTR were considered by the four Commonwealth Regional Advisory Boards.

34. The CYMM agreed that the MTR would be preceded by regional Ministers Meetings, which are to be self-financed, include representation of all RYC members and be convened in the wings of other regional meetings, wherever possible. 7CYMM also agreed that the Ministerial Review Group will include 2 representatives per region as well as the 4 RYC coordinators and the Pan-Commonwealth Youth Caucus Chair.

CYP Strategic Directions

35. Ministers received an analytical Report, which assessed the continued role and relevance of CYP as an organization that must remain relevant to the dynamic nature of youth development. The Report posited necessary and logical directions in which CYP should progress the development of youth work for the benefit of Commonwealth youth and for development in Commonwealth nations.

36. The CYMM agreed on a more strategic role for the Commonwealth and CYP with regard to youth and peace building recognising that sustainable peace and security are paramount to development.

37. 7CYMM and recommended that the Northern Uganda Youth Development Centre (NUYDC) be adopted as a CoE in peace-building and further recommended that consideration be given to tabling a resolution to the United Nations on the role of youth and peace building.

CYP Financial Matters

38. The Meeting received a paper on the proposed and forecasted budgets for 2008/09 and 2009/10 respectively, which were submitted to the Executive Committee of the Board of Governors in February 2008 as per current governance procedures. The Meeting noted that the budgets have been increased in line with inflation (zero real growth) each year as approved by

the Executive Committee of the Board of Governors in February 2008 and that the final budgets will be submitted to the Board of Governors for approval in May 2008

39. The Meeting also received a paper on the implementation of the changes in funding arrangements of the CYP from voluntary pledges to assessed contributions in keeping with the CHOGM 2007 mandate.

40. In relation to the Assessed Contributions Formula, Ministers noted that the Board of Governors is currently looking at the Commonwealth Secretariat (COMSEC) formula and will make the decision on the CYP formula.

41. Ministers also noted the status of the arrears of contributions to the CYP fund. The Meeting commended those Member States who have paid their dues and those who have made outstanding contributions and having reviewed the options open to members experiencing payment problems, urged Governments concerned to settle their arrears expeditiously.

Other matters

42. 7CYMM noted with appreciation statements relating to preparations for the 7th Commonwealth Youth Forum (CYF) in Trinidad and Tobago, and the 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) Youth Forum to be held in Malaysia.

Message to CHOGM 2009

43. Ministers agreed to submit the attached message to CHOGM 2009 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

Appreciation

44. 7CYMM expressed their warm appreciation to the President, the Government, and the people of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for their warm and generous hospitality. Ministers acknowledged the special arrangements made for the CYMM and the excellent administrative and logistical support provided by all volunteers who comprised the National Task Force. CYMM especially acknowledged the Honourable Pavithra Wanniarachchi, Youth Affairs Minister in her role as Chair. Finally 7CYMM acknowledged the work of CYP towards the success of the Meeting.

Next Meeting

45. Ministers accepted the offer of the Government of Papua New Guinea to host their next Meeting in 2012.

Colombo, Sri Lanka
April 30, 2008