

## **Communiqué: Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting, Gaborone, Botswana, 30 May 2003**

1. Commonwealth Youth Ministers met in Gaborone, Botswana, from 27 May to 30 May 2003 under the theme 'Young People: Development Partners Against Poverty and HIV/AIDS'. Thirty-seven countries and territories, of which 23 were represented by Ministers, were in attendance. Of these, 29 included young people on their delegations.
2. The meeting was opened by HE Mr Festus Mogae, President of the Republic of Botswana, and chaired by the Hon Thebe Mogami, Minister of Labour and Home Affairs. Representatives of the Commonwealth Foundation, Commonwealth Games Federation, Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council, Connect Youth - British Council, the Southern African Development Community, UNICEF, UN Youth Unit and the United States Peace Corps, participated as observers.
3. Ministers welcomed the occasion of the meeting as an opportunity to review the progress made by the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) since their last meeting. They reaffirmed their commitment to youth development in the Commonwealth, and noted the emergence of a new paradigm guiding the CYP in its work. This approach is based on international human rights standards, focusing on such criteria as participation, transparency and accountability in the development and promotion of policy and programmes.
4. The Meeting received reports from the Pan-Commonwealth Youth Caucus and endorsed its recommendations to member governments, the CYP and youth representatives. These recommendations included, inter alia, the renaming of the Regional Youth Forum as the Regional Youth Caucus, professionalisation of the Caucus, strengthening of youth governance and enhancement of active youth participation. Ministers also noted the importance of governments' incorporating into national policies the institutional frameworks that embrace youth participation, youth enterprise development and the provision of resources for strengthening youth governance and networks.
5. Ministers endorsed the report of the Committee of Management and commended the Committee's call for strategic and impact assessments necessary for advancing the work of the CYP.
6. Ministers acknowledged the progress made by the CYP in implementing the recommendations of the Ministerial Review Group adopted at the 2000 CYMM in Solomon Islands. In particular they recommended that project collaboration among divisions of the Commonwealth Secretariat

be strengthened to enable CYP to draw on the technical expertise of other divisions.

7. The Meeting recognised the value of young people's participation in Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meetings. Ministers agreed that, with immediate effect, national youth representatives would be able to make direct interventions and fully participate in the meetings, at the discretion of the head of their national delegation.
8. Ministers adopted the CYP Strategic and Operational Plan for 2003-2006, which sets the CYP's priorities under four broad strategic areas. The CYP will therefore focus on Youth Enterprise Development, Youth Networks and Governance, Youth Participation and Youth Work Education and Training. In so doing, relevant youth priorities, particularly the importance of efforts to combat HIV/AIDS, will be highlighted.
9. Ministers commended the progress on the implementation of the Youth For the Future Initiative (YFF) which was endorsed by the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Coober Pedy, Australia, in 2002. Ministers acknowledged that youth volunteering, mentoring, leadership education and enterprise development activities will facilitate the engagement of young people economically, politically and socially, contributing to the elimination of poverty and encouraging sustainable development.
10. Ministers recognised the central role that programmes such as the Commonwealth Youth Credit Initiative and the YFF Youth Enterprise Development play in promoting entrepreneurship and alleviating poverty. They encouraged CYP to pursue the expansion of youth enterprise initiatives across the Commonwealth. Ministers noted an invitation to attend a Youth Enterprise Development Forum in Australia in November 2003. They further noted a proposal to establish a special global fund to promote youth enterprise across the Commonwealth.
11. Ministers emphasised the importance of information and communications technologies (ICT) in breaking the cycle of poverty. They urged the CYP to expand its efforts in bridging the digital divide through the provision of ICT education and access.
12. Ministers considered the primary factors contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS among young women and men in the Commonwealth. They mandated CYP to continue expanding its work in raising awareness of the pandemic, with reference to specific recommendations: advocacy, peer education and support, promoting behaviour change, and forging partnerships with regional and global agencies. They noted the importance of political will, the involvement of young people in intervention strategies, resource mobilisation, supportive legal frameworks, and programmes to combat mother-to-child transmission and to increase the treatment of sexually transmitted infections.

13. Ministers commended the CYP Youth Ambassadors for Positive Living Programme as an innovative means of peer education and support for those living with the virus. They noted that the programme, initiated in the Africa region, had now been replicated in Asia and the Caribbean.
14. Ministers decided to rename the Commonwealth Youth Service Awards as the Commonwealth Youth Gold Award and the Commonwealth Youth Silver Award and to increase the number. At the Pan-Commonwealth level, four Commonwealth Youth Gold Awards will now be offered, one for each region. In each of the four regions, five Commonwealth Youth Silver Awards will be offered. Ministers commended the winners of three pan-Commonwealth awards, for innovative projects in the Cook Islands, Nigeria, and the United Republic of Tanzania, announced at the meeting.
15. Ministers noted a proposal to review the CYP governance arrangements and in particular to dissolve the Committee of Management. They discussed the possibility of this being done in a phased manner. They noted the value of strong youth representation in CYP processes and recommended that the future governance structure should ensure that the Commonwealth's young people actively participate and be involved in both the Executive Committee and the Board of Governors. Ministers endorsed the proposal to move the CYP to a four-year planning cycle, in line with that of other Secretariat funds.
16. Ministers recommended that an internal audit process together with a benchmarking exercise for indirect costs be carried out in order to ensure effective financial controls of the CYP's resources. They agreed that the formula for calculating the pledges should be reviewed in order to preserve the integrity of the fund, and encouraged the early settlement of outstanding pledges.
17. Ministers noted the CYP's efforts to secure Extra-Budgetary Resources. They recommended that further efforts to harness these resources be encouraged, provided that such efforts remain consistent with the attainment of the CYP goals and programme mandates.
18. Ministers received reports from collaborating partners: Commonwealth Foundation, Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council, UNICEF, UN Youth Unit and Commonwealth Games Federation. They acknowledged with appreciation the added value partners bring to the work of CYP and called for continued collaboration in this regard.
19. Ministers accepted with pleasure the offer from the Government of The Bahamas to host the next Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting in 2006.

***Message to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2003***

Young people constitute two-thirds of the Commonwealth's population. They represent the current vibrancy of the Commonwealth and the hope for our future development, productivity and prosperity through the promotion of Commonwealth values.

Ministers of Youth from the Commonwealth, at our meeting in Gaborone, Botswana in May 2003, under the theme "Young People: Development Partners Against Poverty and HIV/AIDS", endorsed the vision of the CYP for young people to maximize their participation in development and democracy, shaping the present and future of their communities and societies.

We recognize the new approach to engaging with young people must include sensitivity to the human rights of young people and stronger accountability frameworks with more genuine consultative processes. Whilst cognisant of the diverse nature of national development, we acknowledge the need for increased resource allocation, political commitments and democratic structures to facilitate increased youth development. Ministers invite Heads of Government to give greater priority to incorporating the CYP strategic programme areas into their National Development Plans.

Youth Ministers are mindful of the need to streamline the governance mechanisms and cycle of the CYP to be in harmony with other Secretariat funds.

The attached Communiqué sets out the way forward for the next three years. We are sure that CHOGM will confirm our deliberations.

Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting  
Gaborone, Botswana  
30 May 2003