

HUMAN RIGHTS: CORE OF THE COMMONWEALTH

Specific action points from CHOGM Declarations and Communiqués of the last ten years and points relating to poverty alleviation and socio-economic development

Human Rights in the Secretariat

Harare Declaration 1991

Paragraph 9: “[W]e pledge the Commonwealth and our countries to work with renewed vigour, concentrating especially in the following areas:..

- fundamental human rights, including equal rights and opportunities for all citizens regardless of race, colour, creed or political belief;

Harare Communiqué

Paragraph 10 – “Heads of Government also gave consideration to the adequacy of Commonwealth institutions, including the Secretariat, to fulfil the task ahead. They welcomed the Secretary-General’s internal review which had identified a measure of existing resources which could be released for redeployment to priorities identified in the Harare Commonwealth Declaration and endorsed his proposal to institute a management audit, to be undertaken by external consultants, designed to enhance the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the Secretariat. While commending the proposals contained in the Secretary-General’s Strategic Action Plan they considered that these should be further examined by senior officials of the High-Level Appraisal Group in the light of priorities agreed to at the Harare Heads of Government Meeting, taking into account the management audit and the Secretariat’s need for adequate resources to implement these priorities. If it emerged that additional resources were still required, after available resources had been matched to needs, Heads of Government agreed to consider making appropriate contributions”.

Paragraph 16 - “Recognising that human rights is one of the priorities identified in the Harare Declaration, they requested the Secretariat to give greater impetus to its current activities to promote human rights in all its aspects. Heads of Government recognised the role that non-governmental organisations could play in this area”.

Limassol Communiqué 1993

Paragraph 56 – “noted with satisfaction the Commonwealth Secretariat’s efforts to promote human rights in all its aspects, through the dissemination of information; the provision of opportunities for consultation and the sharing of experience and expertise; human rights education and training; and assistance with the establishment or strengthening of national human rights institutions and mechanisms. They asked the Secretariat to provide for increased allocations to that area as much as available resources would allow.”

Millbrook Action Programme 1995

Paragraph 6 (i) – “to strengthen the Secretariat’s capacity for undertaking developmental work through support for its various Funds and especially by restoring the resources of the CFTC to their 1991/92 level in real terms; and to provide adequate resources to the Commonwealth of Learning and to the Commonwealth Foundation.”

Coolum Declaration 2002

“[W]e determine materially to strengthen the Commonwealth’s capacity to support its members’ pursuit of democratic values and the rule of law. We have clarified the conditions under which the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group will in future address serious or persistent violations of the Harare Principles, which go beyond the unconstitutional overthrow of member governments. A clear set of procedures – in which the Secretary-General and the Chairperson in Office will have an important part to play – will help ensure transparent and effective dealing with any member state concerned. We are committed to strengthening the Good Offices role of the Commonwealth Secretary-General and have agreed to strengthen the Commonwealth’s work in supporting democratic practice, in resolving tensions, in conflict prevention and resolution, and in post-conflict rebuilding, working in consultation with regional organisations as appropriate.”

Bodies for implementation of human rights principles

Millbrook Action Program 1995

3. Where a member country is perceived to be clearly in violation of the Harare Commonwealth Declaration, and particularly in the event of an unconstitutional overthrow of a democratically elected government, appropriate steps should be taken to express the collective concern of Commonwealth countries and to encourage the restoration of democracy within a reasonable time frame. These include:

- i. immediate public expression by the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth’s collective disapproval of any such infringement of the Harare principles;
- ii. early contact by the Secretary-General with the de facto government, followed by continued good offices and appropriate technical assistance to facilitate an early restoration of democracy;
- iii. encouraging bilateral démarches by member countries, especially those within the region, both to express disapproval and to support early restoration of democracy;
- iv. appointment of an envoy or a group of eminent Commonwealth representatives where, following the Secretary-General’s contacts with the authorities concerned, such a mission is deemed beneficial in reinforcing the Commonwealth’s good offices role;
- v. stipulation of up to two years as the time frame for the restoration of democracy where the institutions are not in place to permit the holding of elections within, say, a maximum of six months;
- vi. pending restoration of democracy, exclusion of the government concerned from participation at ministerial-level meetings of the Commonwealth, including CHOGMs;
- vii. suspension of participation at all Commonwealth meetings and of Commonwealth technical assistance if acceptable progress is not recorded by the government concerned after a period of two years; and
- viii. consideration of appropriate further bilateral and multilateral measures by all member states (e.g. limitation of government-to-government contacts; people-to-people measures; trade restrictions; and, in exceptional cases, suspension from the association), to reinforce the need for change in the event that the government concerned chooses to leave the Commonwealth and/or persists in violating the principles of the Harare Commonwealth Declaration even after two years.

4. We have decided to establish a Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on the Harare Declaration in order to deal with serious or persistent violations of the principles contained in that Declaration. The Group will be convened by the Secretary-General and will comprise the Foreign Ministers of eight countries, supplemented as appropriate by one or two additional ministerial representatives from the region concerned. It will be the Group's task to assess the nature of the infringement and recommend measures for collective Commonwealth action aimed at the speedy restoration of democracy and constitutional rule.

5. The composition, terms of reference and operation of the Group will be reviewed by us every two years.

Durban Communiqué 1999

Paragraph 21 - "Heads commended the role played by CMAG as a custodian of the Harare Principles. They agreed that CMAG should continue to address serious or persistent violations of those Principles and that its future mandate should be considered further by the Commonwealth High-Level Group"

Law Ministers Meeting 1999

Paragraph 20 - "The principle of a Human Rights Impact Assessment which recognises the principle of the indivisibility, the inter-dependence and the interconnectedness of human rights and which is applicable at both the national and international levels was welcomed. Ministers noted that some member countries already had in place satisfactory alternative methods (such as the scrutiny of proposed legislation by specialist Human Rights units of parliamentary committees) to further the same objectives. The Secretariat was urged to further refine the concept for consideration by Senior Officials and ultimately by Ministers at their next meeting.

Civil Society / Participation

Durban Communiqué 1999

Paragraph 42 - "declared that people-centred development implied that people must be directly involved in the decision-making process . . . acknowledged the need to enable capacity-building efforts of local and regional non-governmental organisations. They noted the report of the Commonwealth Foundation on Citizens and Governance and the Communiqué of the Third Commonwealth NGO Forum and asked Senior Officials, at their next meeting, to study the issue of the Forum presenting its views to the next CHOGM."

Coolum Declaration 2002

[W]e call on the many intergovernmental, professional and civil society bodies which help to implement our Commonwealth values, to join with us in building closer Commonwealth "family" links, and strengthening consultation and collaboration. We are convinced of the need for stronger links and better two-way communication and coordination between the official and non-governmental Commonwealth, and among Commonwealth NGOs. This will give Commonwealth activities greater impact, ensuring that every programme produces lasting benefit.

Aso Rock Declaration 2003

We strongly reaffirm our commitment to multilateralism, international co-operation, partnership, and productive working relationships between government and civil society organisations

Malta Communiqué 2005

Paragraph- 91 “Heads of Government acknowledged the contribution of civil society, including in supporting democracy, human rights, peace and development. They also acknowledged that governments and civil society share a common objective in addressing development and governance challenges and acknowledged the importance of partnership underpinned by sound institutional, legal and policy frameworks. They urged civil society to be pro-active in the local and national environment with well-defined priorities and governance arrangements.”

Paragraph 92- “Heads of Government noted the steps being taken by the Commonwealth and its institutions to mainstream civil society in all activities and called for these efforts to be increased. They noted civil society's call for the Commonwealth to use its international standing to advocate for policy coherence at the global level.”

Right to Information

Durban Committee of the Whole 1999

Para 20 – Noted the Commonwealth Freedom of Information Principles endorsed by the Commonwealth Law Ministers. Recognised the importance of public access to official information in promoting transparency, accountable governance and the full participation of citizens in democratic process.

Law Ministers Meeting 1999

Para 21 – “Ministers decided to adopt Annex 1 to this Communiqué (Commonwealth Freedom of Information Principles). Ministers recommend that the Commonwealth Secretariat promote these principles and also encourage other Commonwealth groups to consider ways in which they could contribute to the promotion of these principles. Ministers agreed to bring the Commonwealth Freedom of Information Principles to the notice of Commonwealth Heads of Government at their forthcoming meeting in South Africa.”

Annex 1 – as well as outlining the principles of freedom of information, the annex also states that Law Ministers “asked the Secretariat, subject to the availability of resources, to facilitate and assist governments in promoting these principles through technical and other assistance including measures to promote the sharing of experience between member countries and the involvement of civil society in this process.”

Access to Justice

Harare Declaration 1991

Paragraph 4: “...we believe in the liberty of the individual under the law, in equal rights for all citizens regardless of gender, race, colour, creed or political belief...”

Paragraph 9: “[W]e pledge the Commonwealth and our countries to work with renewed vigour, concentrating especially in the following areas:...

- help for small Commonwealth states in tackling their particular economic and security problems;”

Millbrook Action Programme 1995

Paragraph 2: ‘The Secretariat should enhance its capacity to provide advice, training and other forms of technical assistance to governments in promoting the Commonwealth’s fundamental political values, including:...

- strengthening the rule of law and promoting the independence of the judiciary through the promotion of exchanges among, and training of, the judiciary;...”

Edinburgh Communique 1997

27. Heads of Government expressed their belief that an International Criminal Court (ICC) would be an important development in the international promotion of the rule of law. They expressed support for the efforts of the UN Preparatory Committee to negotiate a Statute for an ICC and encouraged participation in those negotiations and in the Plenipotentiary Conference next year by as many Commonwealth countries as possible.

Coolum Declaration 2002

At the outset of this new millennium we, the Heads of Government of the Commonwealth of Nations, meeting at Coolum, Australia, renew our enduring commitment to the values and principles which we share. We stand united in:

- our collective striving after international peace and security, the rule of international law and the elimination of people-smuggling and the scourge of terrorism.

Abuja Communique 2003

Heads of Government acknowledged that judicial independence and delivery of efficient justice services were important for maintaining the balance of power between the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary

Malta Communique 2005

27. Heads of Government observed that insecurity, armed conflict, gender inequality and the failure to promote and protect human rights undermine development and poverty reduction and endanger the security and stability of states. They underlined that social and economic marginalisation also undermines security and stability. Heads of Government urged member countries to ensure that, where appropriate, national poverty reduction frameworks and development assistance programmes include measures to build effective and accountable security and justice sectors, particularly in countries affected by conflicts.

38. Heads of Government of those member countries that have ratified the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court welcomed the 100th ratification the Rome Statute and urged other states that have not yet done so to accede to the Rome Statute in a timely manner.

Law Ministers 2005

Paragraph 33- Law Ministers had expressed at their 2002 Meeting their commitment to the United Nations Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power. At that Meeting they considered a draft Commonwealth Statement which applied those Basic Principles to the position of victims of crime and was adapted to the practices of common law jurisdictions. They referred the draft for further consideration by Senior Officials, who agreed to a revised text at their 2004 meeting.

Paragraph 34- The Meeting considered the revised text and after agreeing to a number of amendments, Law Ministers adopted the Commonwealth Statement in terms which appear as Annex 3 to this Communiqué. They asked the Commonwealth Secretariat to consider further the role of Parole Boards and similar bodies in this context.

Democracy

Harare Declaration 1991

Paragraph 4: "...we believe...in the individual's inalienable right to participate by means of free and democratic political processes in framing the society in which he or she lives..."

Paragraph 9: "[W]e pledge the Commonwealth and our countries to work with renewed vigour, concentrating especially in the following areas:

- democracy, democratic processes and institutions which reflect national circumstances, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, just and honest government;"

10.To give weight and effectiveness to our commitments we intend to focus and improve Commonwealth co-operation in these areas. This would include strengthening the capacity of the Commonwealth to respond to requests from members for assistance in entrenching the practices of democracy, accountable administration and the rule of law.

Millbrook Action Programme 1995

Paragraph 2: The Secretariat should enhance its capacity to provide advice, training and other forms of technical assistance to governments in promoting the Commonwealth's fundamental political values, including:

- assistance in creating and building the capacity of requisite institutions;
- assistance in constitutional and legal matters, including with selecting models and initiating programmes of democratisation;
- assistance in the electoral field, including the establishment or strengthening of independent electoral machinery, civic and voter education, the preparation of Codes of Conduct, and assistance with voter registration;
- observation of elections, including by-elections or local elections where appropriate, at the request of the member governments concerned;
- support for good government, particularly in the area of public service reform; and...
- other activities, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and other bodies, to strengthen the democratic culture and effective parliamentary practices.

Edinburgh Communiqué 1997

9. Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to the fundamental values of the Commonwealth, as set out in the Harare Commonwealth Declaration of 1991 and emphasised that democracy, good governance, sustainable development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms were interdependent and mutually reinforcing. They commended the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association for its work in strengthening the democratic culture and effective parliamentary practices, and its efforts to enhance the participation of women in public life.

Coolum Declaration 2002

At the outset of this new millennium we, the Heads of Government of the Commonwealth of Nations, meeting at Coolum, Australia, renew our enduring commitment to the values and principles which we share. We stand united in:

- our commitment to democracy, the rule of law, good governance, freedom of expression and the protection of human rights;

Aso Rock Declaration 2003

“we commit ourselves to make democracy work better for pro-poor development by implementing sustainable development programmes and enhancing democratic institutions and processes in all human endeavours. We recognise that building democracy is a constantly evolving process. It must also be uncomplicated and take into account national circumstances. Among the objectives we seek to promote are the following:

- i. a participatory democracy characterised by free and fair elections and
 - representative legislatures;
- ii. an independent judiciary;
- iii. a well-trained public service;
- iv. a transparent and accountable public accounts system;
- v. machinery to protect human rights;
- vi. the right to information;
- vii. active participation of civil society, including women and youth;
- viii. substantially increased and more effective financial resources;
- ix. adherence to the internationally agreed targets of 0.7 per cent of Gross
 - National Product for development assistance;
- x. financing and realisation of the Millennium Development Goals; and
- xi. increased democracy at the global level, including enhanced participation
 - and transparency in international institutions.”

Malta Declaration 2005

We reaffirm that democracy and development are organically interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Democratic governance facilitates sustainable development. At the same time, poverty and inequity can place democracy in peril. We therefore reiterate our firm commitment to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and are deeply concerned by the uneven progress attained so far.

Development / Poverty reduction

Harare Declaration 1991

Paragraph 4: "...we recognise the importance and urgency of economic and social development to satisfy the basic needs and aspirations of the vast majority of the peoples of the world, and seek the progressive removal of the wide disparities in living standards amongst our members..."

Paragraph 8: Only sound and sustainable development can offer these millions the prospect of betterment. Achieving this will require a flow of public and private resources from the developed to the developing world, and domestic and international regimes conducive to the realisation of these goals. Development facilitates the task of tackling a range of problems which affect the whole global community such as environmental degradation, the problems of migration and refugees, the fight against communicable diseases, and drug production and trafficking.

Paragraph 9: "[W]e pledge the Commonwealth and our countries to work with renewed vigour, concentrating especially in the following areas:

- the promotion of sustainable development and the alleviation of poverty in the countries of the Commonwealth through:
 - a stable international economic framework within which growth can be achieved;
 - sound economic management recognising the central role of the market economy;
 - effective population policies and programmes;
 - sound management of technological change;
- the freest possible flow of multilateral trade on terms fair and equitable to all, taking account of the special requirements of developing countries;
- an adequate flow of resources from the developed to developing countries, and action to alleviate the debt burdens of developing countries most in need;
- effective and increasing programmes of bilateral and multilateral co-operation aimed at raising living standards;
- extending the benefits of development within a framework of respect for human rights;

Millbrook Action Programme 1995

6. We reaffirmed our view that the Commonwealth should continue to be a source of help in promoting development and literacy and in eradicating poverty, particularly as these bear on women and children. With a view to enhancing its capacity in this area, we agreed on the following steps:

- i. to strengthen the Secretariat's capacity for undertaking developmental work through support for its various Funds and especially by restoring the resources of the CFTC to their 1991/92 level in real terms; and to provide adequate resources to the Commonwealth of Learning and to the Commonwealth Foundation;
- ii. to support a greater flow of investment to developing member countries through such schemes as the Commonwealth Private Investment Initiative;
- iii. to work for continued progress in assisting countries with unsustainable debt burdens and to promote enhanced multilateral concessional financial flows to developing countries; in particular, to support new and innovative mechanisms for relief on multilateral debt, such

- as the one proposed by the British Chancellor of the Exchequer at the 1994 Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting in Malta, and reiterated subsequently;
- iv. to support the Secretariat in facilitating the adoption by more Commonwealth countries of successful self-help schemes, with non-governmental agencies and others acting as catalytic agents, for mobilising the energies of people in alleviating poverty;
 - v. to support the efforts of small island developing states to mitigate the effects on their development of environmental change, natural disasters and the changing international trading system; and
 - vi. to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS, which threatens large parts of the younger population of many countries, recognising that the effective exploitation of economic opportunities requires a healthy and educated population; and to provide further resources to renew the core funding of the Southern African Network of AIDS Organisations (SANASO), along with increased funding for UNICEF initiatives in Southern Africa.

Fancourt Declaration [link:

http://www.thecommonwealth.org/dynamic/ViewAPress_search.asp?ID=126]

The Fancourt Commonwealth Declaration on Globalisation and People-Centred Development is specifically directed at a consideration of how the Commonwealth can better support people-centred development and recognised that: “[T]he elimination of poverty is achievable - but only if we take determined and concerted action at national and international levels... If the poor and the vulnerable are to be at the centre of development, the process must be participatory, in which they have a voice...”

Coolum Declaration 2002

At the outset of this new millennium we, the Heads of Government of the Commonwealth of Nations, meeting at Coolum, Australia, renew our enduring commitment to the values and principles which we share. We stand united in:

- our determination to work to eliminate poverty, to promote people-centred and sustainable development, and thus progressively to remove the wide disparities in living standards among us and overcome the special challenges facing our small state and less developed country members;...

We cannot accept that nearly half the world’s population should live in poverty, nor that disease, illiteracy and environmental degradation should continue to blight the lives of many of our people, nor the fact that in too many societies women continue to face discrimination. The benefits of globalisation must be shared more widely and its focus channelled for the elimination of poverty and human deprivation. We stress the importance of equality of access to economic opportunities and the need to apply new international standards such as the OECD Harmful Tax Initiative evenly, equitably and without exception.

The Fancourt Declaration and the UN Millennium Declaration have laid a firm base for us to push back the frontiers of poverty and under-development. In pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals, we call on governments to seize the opportunities presented by the Financing for Development Conference (Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002) and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, August/September 2002) to chart a more sustainable and equitable growth path for the world. We also welcome the groundbreaking

proposal from Africa to tackle poverty through the New Partnership for Africa's Development, and will use our best efforts to support similar partnerships in other regions of the Commonwealth. More broadly, we call on all nations to work to reduce the growing gap between rich and poor, and to enhance international support to democracies fighting poverty...

[I]n pursuit of a more equitable distribution of the benefits of globalisation and in pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals, we are committed to forging new opportunities for our members in trade, in investment and in private sector development. We have agreed steps which will help our organisation better identify and promote its members' economic and development needs in an increasingly competitive international environment. We recognise the importance of enhancing market access in the global trading system, particularly for the poorest and smallest countries. To this end, we welcome and give our strong support to the agreement reached in Doha on the World Trade Organisation's new multilateral trade negotiations. Through an enhanced facilitation role, we want our organisation to help member states get better access to international assistance, and to focus the Commonwealth's own related programmes more effectively on the assistance it is best-equipped to provide. We support the HLRG's strategy to bridge the information and communications technology gap between rich and poor.

Aso Rock Declaration 1993

"We welcome the efforts of the Commonwealth to attain the MDGs, in particular for poverty eradication, through technical assistance programmes in developing member countries. We affirm our enthusiasm and resolve to increase aid levels to support the MDGs."

Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs 2004

Paragraph 11- As 70 per cent of those living in poverty are women, Ministers identified that it was critical to facilitate the process of women's economic empowerment, for which a multipronged approach is required. This includes macroeconomic processes, an enabling environment for women's employment, and increased access to productive resources such as land, property and financial services, and increasing and improving girls' educational opportunities.

Malta Declaration 2005

We are determined to intensify our efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals and their associated targets, and to help one another to do so. We are mindful in particular of the Goal to develop a global partnership for development. In this regard, we are committed to making available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications technologies (ICTs), in partnership between the public and private sectors.

Ratifying the ICESCR

Harare Communiqué

Paragraph 17 – "Believing the International Bill of Human Rights to be the cornerstone of international human rights, Heads of Government reiterated their call to those of their members

who have not already done so, to become a party to the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights”.

Limassol Communiqué 1993

Paragraph 8 – “reiterated their commitment to the International Bill of Human Rights, and called on member governments which had not already done so to make every effort to become party to the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights by 1995”.

Women/Gender

Harare Declaration 1991

Paragraph 9: “[W]e pledge the Commonwealth and our countries to work with renewed vigour, concentrating especially in the following areas:

- equality for women, so that they may exercise their full and equal rights;

Harare Communiqué

Paragraph 75 – “endorsed the Ottawa Declaration on Women and Structural Adjustment which Ministers Responsible for Women’s Affairs prepared at their meeting in October 1990”.

Extracts from the Ottawa Declaration 1991

Paragraph 7 – “we commit our governments and commend to others the following programme of action:(iii) “increasing gender awareness throughout government; ensuring the full involvement of women in decision-making and operational processes at all levels . . . encouraging effective channels for women and women’s organisations to express their perspectives and concerns; and establishing steering committees within Ministries of Finance to ensure that gender issues are incorporated into all decisions relating to structural adjustment”.

Limassol Communiqué 1993

Paragraph 9 – “reaffirmed that women’s rights were an integral and indivisible part of human rights and supported the principles embodied in the Vienna Declaration and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. They urged all Commonwealth governments to ratify by 1995 the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. They regarded violence against women as a contravention of women’s rights”

Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Women’s Affairs 2000

Paragraph 30 - ministers requested those countries who had not yet done so to ratify CEDAW and work towards its effective implementation.Paragraph 37 – re-affirmed the 30% target (with encouragement to eventual parity) of women in decision-making in the political, public and private sectors to the year 2005.

Durban Committee of the Whole 1999

Paragraph 25 – “invited Heads of Government to endorse the message of Ministers Responsible for Women’s Affairs, to ensure future Commonwealth support to governments and the Secretariat to mainstream gender; to enhance women’s participation in political decision-making and peace processes; to promote women’s human rights; and to address the impacts of globalisation and macro-economic changes on women and vulnerable communities.”

Aso Rock Declaration 2003

“We recognise the critical role which women play in development and resolve to ensure that development processes empower women to play that full role.”

Malta Communiqué 2005

Paragraph 85- “Heads of Government acknowledged that gender equality and women's rights are essential preconditions for the achievement of development, MDGs, democracy and peace. They expressed their resolve to achieve political, economic and social equality for women as outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action and international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), so as to create the necessary environment for the promotion, protection and full realisation of the rights of women and girls.”

Paragraph 86- “Heads of Government requested the Commonwealth Secretariat to assist member countries in achieving the MDGs on gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as promoting gender equality through the other seven MDGs.”

Law Minister's Meeting 2005

Paragraph 13- “The Meeting adopted a resolution in the following terms:

- Commonwealth Law Ministers noted that the Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (which was agreed at the 7th Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting in Fiji Islands in May-June 2004) identified the area of gender, human rights and law as one of the four critical areas for Commonwealth action over the next ten years.
- The Meeting recognised the importance of enacting and enforcing laws for the achievement of gender equality. In this regard, as Ministers responsible for law and justice, they resolved to play their part in the implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality.
- Ministers also encouraged the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Division to work closely with the Gender Section of the Social Transformation Programmes Division and the Youth Affairs Division to ensure the implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality.”

Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs 2004

Paragraph 8- Ministers called on the international community to give attention to the debt burden of other poor countries excluded from the MDRI and HIPC process, that have continued to service their debts. They noted that small and vulnerable countries are also facing growing debt burdens. In addition, Ministers also recognised that domestic, as well as external debt, is imposing a significant fiscal burden on some poor countries.

Children

Harare Communiqué

Paragraph 76 – “welcomed the Plan of Action for Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s adopted by the World Summit for Children and committed themselves to the achievement of its goals. These included targeted reduction of infant and maternal mortality; the achievement of health and education for all by the year 2000; sustaining and improving immunisation levels; and ratification and implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child”.

Durban Communiqué 1999

Paragraph 35 - “welcomed the adoption in June 1999 by the International Labour Organisation of the Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. They noted that a large number of Commonwealth countries had signed the Convention and urged its ratification by as many member governments as possible.”

Malta Communiqué 2005

Paragraph 40- “Heads of Government further expressed their deep concern at the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict by armed forces and groups and urged member states to take measures to ensure accountability by those responsible for abuse against children and to prohibit and criminalise such practices and assist those affected children.”

Environment

Harare Declaration 1991

Paragraph 9: “[W]e pledge the Commonwealth and our countries to work with renewed vigour, concentrating especially in the following areas:

- the protection of the environment through respect for the principles of sustainable development which we enunciated at Langkawi;

Harare Communiqué

Paragraph 67 – “undertook to co-operate closely in elaborating a realistic and achievable action programme under Agenda 21, which should take account of the different needs, responsibilities and capabilities of developed and developing countries and address action at national, regional and international levels”.

Durban Communiqué 1999

Paragraph 44 – “called upon the Commonwealth Secretariat and other international organisations, upon request by member states, to initiate studies to increase the availability of alternative, sustainable and affordable sources of energy especially in Africa south of the Sahara.”

Law Minister's Meeting 1999

Paragraph 22 – “endorsed the suggestion that those Commonwealth countries which had not yet done so should ratify relevant international and recognised environmental agreements. They asked the Commonwealth Secretariat to continue to monitor developments in this field.”

Malta Communiqué 2005

Paragraph 70- “Heads of Government noted with concern the adverse immediate and long term effects of climate change, biodiversity loss, water management issues, deforestation and sea-level rise on small island and other states that are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of global warming and sea level rise. They urged Commonwealth member states and the wider international community to meet their obligations under relevant multilateral environment agreements including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and to implement their commitments under Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI).”

Debt Relief and Aid

Harare Communiqué

Paragraph 55 – “called for further debt relief, including cancellation, and increased aid and capital flows, as well as for further measures in developing countries to attract such flows”.

Paragraph 58 – “expressed regret that during the 1980s the aid of most Development Assistance Committee donors had stagnated as a proportion of their gross national product and still fell short of the agreed United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of GNP.”

Auckland Communiqué

Paragraph 32 – endorsed the conclusions on debt reached by the Commonwealth Finance Ministers at their 1995 Jamaica meeting including 80% relief for the most needy.

Millbrook Action Programme 1995

Paragraph 6 (iii) – “to work for continued progress in assisting countries with unsustainable debt burdens and to promote enhanced multilateral concessional financial flows to developing countries; in particular, to support new and innovative mechanisms for relief on multilateral debt”.

Edinburgh Communiqué 1997

Paragraph 7 – “expressed concern about the special problems of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). To enable them to share the benefits of globalisation, they invited donors to work for the target of 0.15 per cent of GNP for LDCs. They also resolved to promote the role of micro credit in poverty reduction”.

Durban Communiqué 1999

Paragraph 38 – “They welcomed the enhanced HIPC initiative, agreed at the autumn 1999 meetings of the Interim and Development Committees. They reiterated the Commonwealth commitment to support the swift implementation of the recent agreements to provide deeper, wider and faster debt relief, with the overarching aim of reducing poverty in HIPC countries.”

Aso Rock Declaration 2003

We welcome the advisory and consensus-building work of the Commonwealth Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Ministerial Forum and encourage its efforts to achieve HIPC’s sustainable exit from debt.

We support the provision of additional resources through topping-up at the completion point under HIPC and a more comprehensive approach to address unsustainable debt.

Abuja Communiqué 2003

Paragraph 40- Heads of Government called on international financial institutions to adopt a broader and more flexible approach to debt relief, designed to achieve long-term debt sustainability and release resources particularly for health and education.

Malta Communiqué 2005

Paragraph 63- “Heads of Government expressed their shared concern about the effectiveness of the use of resources released through debt cancellation.”

Paragraph 64- “Heads of Government further stressed the need to consider additional measures and initiatives aimed at ensuring long term debt sustainability through increased grant based financing, cancellation of 100 per cent of the official multilateral and bilateral debt of Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) and, where appropriate, and on a case-by-case basis, to consider significant debt relief or restructuring for low- and middle-income developing countries, including Least Developed Countries,”

Finance Ministers Meeting 2006

Paragraph 15- Ministers called on the international community to give attention to the debt burden of other poor countries excluded from the MDRI and HIPC process, that have continued to service their debts. They noted that small and vulnerable countries are also facing growing debt burdens. In addition, Ministers also recognised that domestic, as well as external debt, is imposing a significant fiscal burden on some poor countries.