

**18<sup>th</sup> CONFERENCE OF COMMONWEALTH EDUCATION MINISTERS (18CCEM), SVICC, MAURITIUS**

**STATEMENT TO MINISTERS FROM THE STAKEHOLDERS' FORUM**

Thursday 30 August 2012

**Priority issues**

- ✓ Supporting the Ministerial Working Group on the post-2015 agenda
- ✓ Improving Commonwealth Co-operation in Education
- ✓ Protecting the Right to Quality Education during the Global Economic Crisis
- ✓ Preparing Citizens to Achieve their full potential
- ✓ Providing Skills for Employability
- ✓ Continuing to Invest in Girls' Education
- ✓ Delivering Education During and After Conflict
- ✓ Recognising the Educational Challenges of Small Island States
- ✓ Exploring Educational Policies in Communities Affected by Migration
- ✓ Culture, Language and Learning
- ✓ Inspiring New Commonwealth Educational Achievements

**THANKING OUR HOSTS**

1. As delegates attending the 18CCEM Stakeholders' Forum, comprising all educational stakeholder groups including government, business, academic institutions, educational providers, civil society, development and donor communities, we thank the Government and people of Mauritius for their warm welcome and generous hospitality.

**SUPPORTING THE MINISTERIAL WORKING GROUP ON THE POST-2015 AGENDA**

2. We strongly endorse the Commonwealth Secretariat's proposal to establish a Ministerial Working Group from 18CCEM to develop the educational element of a post-2015 global framework, in support of the United Nations High Level Panel on the post-2015 development agenda.
3. **We call on Ministers to include the following in the Working Group's terms of reference:**
  - a. **Taking a holistic and inclusive approach to all forms of education: from early childhood, through the formal education system of primary, secondary and tertiary, to vocational training, adult education, non-formal life-long learning and continuous professional learning especially for educators**
  - b. **Promoting learning for all in preparation for responsible citizenship, and social, cultural, economic and political development, meeting the specific needs of those with disabilities, suffering ill health, living in poverty and other difficult circumstances**
  - c. **Protecting and improving educational institutions, including schools, museums and libraries**
  - d. **Prioritising education for sustainable development, work-oriented vocational training and 'green skills'**
  - e. **Addressing the challenges of delivering education during and after conflict**

**IMPROVING COMMONWEALTH CO-OPERATION IN EDUCATION**

4. In the light of the Secretariat's Strategic Plan Paper<sup>1</sup>, and prior to any decision to reduce the Commonwealth Secretariat's commitment to education, **we call on the Secretary-General to conduct a comprehensive and inclusive review of the Secretariat's remit and involvement in education, the Secretariat's capacity to fulfil its objectives, and to identify effective ways for stakeholders to support this process in the development of education in the Commonwealth.**

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<sup>1</sup> Commonwealth Secretariat (2012) *Strategic Plan 2013-16: First Discussion Paper*, MTF(12) 4

## PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO QUALITY EDUCATION DURING THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS

5. In spite of each Commonwealth government's commitment to the *Millennium Development Goals* and *Education for All*, universal access to education is a distant aspiration for millions of young people.
6. **As in 2006 and 2009, we call on Commonwealth governments to collaborate with public, private and civil society partners to ensure access for all through the development of effective school leaders and teachers to improve quality outcomes.**
7. **We encourage every Commonwealth country to protect education budgets in times of economic hardship.**

## PREPARING CITIZENS TO ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

8. As well as ensuring social and cultural wellbeing, governments should enable citizens to lead economically productive lives. In Commonwealth countries young people below 30 years of age often make up over 60 per cent of the population. Prospects for many are bleak, with increasingly high figures for youth unemployment.
9. **We encourage Ministers to draw on international research which shows that investment in teaching excellence and early childhood education are among the most effective ways of increasing educational outcomes and employability locally and globally.**
10. **We ask Ministers to invest in ICT and its infrastructure for educational purposes to bridge the digital divide and increase educator capacities to improve learning outcomes for students.**

## PROVIDING SKILLS FOR EMPLOYABILITY

11. **We call on Ministers to commission a study for a programme of Commonwealth co-operation to enable countries to draw on each other's experiences to increase employability through contemporary skills training and career guidance.**

## CONTINUE TO INVEST IN GIRLS EDUCATION

12. Educated girls have smaller, healthier families, are less likely to develop HIV/AIDS and earn about 25 per cent more on average than those without education. National GDP increases by an average of 3 per cent with increases of 10 per cent in the number of girls going to school. This enables women to multiply the impact of investment in their future, extending its benefits to families, communities and wider economies. Of the 61 million children who still cannot access school, 53% are girls. Increasing understanding of boys' underachievement has also emerged as a significant challenge.
13. **We urge Ministers to again accelerate their efforts to improve girls' access to education and to review policy implications of research into boys' underachievement.**

## DELIVERING EDUCATION DURING AND AFTER CONFLICT

14. The GMR 2011<sup>2</sup> identifies 28 million children who are denied education as a result of conflict and post-conflict situations. It also recognises that the educational needs of conflict affected adults will be diverse and acute.
15. **We invite Ministers to consider how best to deliver education and training in fragile communities and countries in conflict-related situations. Solutions might include a Commonwealth-wide resource of 'good practice', a roster of trained teachers willing to serve in fragile and post-conflict environments for extended periods of time.**

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<sup>2</sup> Global Monitoring Report (2011). The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education. Paris.

- 16. We urge Ministers to consider establishing a working group to consider these complex issues, which would draw on the resources of Commonwealth civil society and associations committed to the integration of ex-combatants. The work should be firmly rooted in the principles of the seminal Commonwealth report, *Civil Paths to Peace*.**

#### **RECOGNISING THE EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES OF SMALL ISLAND STATES**

17. People who live in island societies are sensitive to belittlement associated with their smallness and to the insensitivity of others to the parameters of difference within and between them. This includes a generalised lack of awareness of their language diversity and its implications for the media of instruction in schools. At the same time there is a trend to marketwise education in island states, creating commercial learning institutions for international students.
- 18. We call on Ministers to expand their support for the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) and to commission research into the implications of the above issues for the education of the young and the expansion of transnational education facilities and learning hubs.**

#### **EXPLORING EDUCATIONAL POLICIES FOR COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY MIGRATION**

19. As recognised by the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, one of the more contentious issues at 15CCEM was the recruitment of poorer Commonwealth country teachers by richer countries. In response, the Commonwealth developed a *Protocol for the Recruitment of Commonwealth Teachers* that has been used and recognised in Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth countries and adopted by the International Labour Organisation.
20. There is clearly room for Ministers to build on this work and monitor its achievements. **Through the Ministers we request that the Secretariat continue to evaluate the impact of the *Protocol for the Recruitment of Commonwealth Teachers*. To strengthen co-operation between Commonwealth countries in the area of education and migration, Ministers should establish a working group of senior officials and experts to explore the potential for adopting development-friendly 'education for migration' policies that deliver benefits for origin and destination countries, as well as for migrants themselves.**

#### **CULTURE, LANGUAGE AND LEARNING**

21. **Recognising culture and education as interdependent, we encourage the use of mother tongue and multi lingual teaching and learning and further propose that promoting teacher proficiency in the English language should be a priority for future Commonwealth co-operation in education. Addressing this issue at school and community levels would lead to success of other interventions.**

#### **INSPIRING NEW COMMONWEALTH EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS**

22. The Commonwealth is recognised for its innovative education solutions and commitment to the sharing of best practice.
23. **Those represented in the Stakeholder Forum pledge their support to work alongside Ministers to explore innovative systems and structures to continue to improve education outcomes across the Commonwealth. This is a significant opportunity to collaborate to ensure every Commonwealth citizen has access to 21<sup>st</sup> century learning opportunities.**

#### **The Development of the Statement**

This statement is the product of a series of meetings convened by the Commonwealth Foundation for interested stakeholders in June this year. Held in London, the meetings were open to all Commonwealth citizens and organisations. Access by teleconference and Skype ensured participation from stakeholders around the Commonwealth. A small committee prepared an initial draft statement as the basis of a 3 week online consultation which received 116 responses from across the Commonwealth. Discussion points and recommendations raised during the Forum and in particular around the themes 'Making Systems Better', 'Connecting Commonwealth and Educational Cultures' and 'Developing skills for the Future' have been taken into account.