

*Commonwealth Consortium for Education*

**Opportunities for Partnerships  
in Education in the Commonwealth**

**Paper for the**

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# Opportunities for Partnerships in Education in the Commonwealth

*Paper by the Commonwealth Consortium for Education*

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# Opportunities for Partnerships in Education in the Commonwealth

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## Preamble

1. Commonwealth Education Ministers last met in November 2000 and issued their Halifax Statement on Education in the Commonwealth, *Education for Our Common Future*. Since then, there have been a number of developments and emerging trends with important implications for the shape and direction of educational co-operation in the Commonwealth and for the work of the official and civil society organisations that support it. Taking account of these, **the Commonwealth Consortium for Education<sup>1</sup> (CCFE) makes the following observations and 10 recommendations (R.1-10, highlighted in the text below) to Ministers, and stands ready to assist with their implementation.**

## A. EDUCATION AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

2. At their last meeting (Coolum, 2002), Commonwealth Heads of Government adopted the Report of a High-Level Group which reviewed the objectives and priorities for the Commonwealth. The Report stated: *“The aim of the Commonwealth’s development programmes should be to strengthen members’ efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals.”* Education is the subject of two of the eight MDGs – achieving universal primary education (UPE) and promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women by eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary enrolments by 2005 and at all levels of education by 2015.
3. In addition, education has a vital role to play in the achievement of all the other MDGs – eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability; and creating a global partnership for development. It has the functions of raising the knowledge and capabilities of individuals, of equipping them to participate in decision-making and democratic processes, and of enhancing national capacities for development in the public and private sectors. Many donors are increasingly shifting their emphasis towards providing financial support for each country’s own national, strategic plans as set out in its government’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and medium-term Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAs). This places additional requirements on each country’s human resource capacities. Education must therefore continue to be a central component of the Commonwealth’s development programmes.
4. Thus, beyond the immediate concern of the education MDGs, a comprehensive and multi-level education system is crucial to meeting the core Commonwealth objectives – achieving all the MDGs, supporting good governance and nurturing the roots of democracy.
5. While a number of international organisations (notably UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank) and bilateral aid agencies now focus heavily on the achievement of the

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex for details of the Consortium

MDGs, the Commonwealth continues to have unique and important roles to play in education – in and beyond the MDGs - in spite of its meagre financial resources. In particular:

- The Commonwealth acts as a voice for the diversity of priorities and needs found throughout members states. Commonwealth principles have long emphasised listening, flexibility, partnerships and collaboration - and, in times of intensified globalisation, such qualities are increasingly important to reflect the distinctive needs of different regional, national or local contexts and to improve the impact and sustainability of internationally inspired educational and social development initiatives.
- As an arena for co-operation, mutual help and support, the Commonwealth has advantages in language; in shared systems and structures; in the institutional networks and capacities of COL, CSFP, CFTC, Commonwealth Foundation, and in the wide range of NGOs and Commonwealth regional bodies; and comparative advantage in tackling certain issues because of its pluralistic nature. The Commonwealth Secretariat has a strong track record in fostering and working through partnerships with COL, with ministries and with the Commonwealth associations and NGOs. A wide variety of productive collaborations in education – including advocacy, policy development, sharing of good practices and piloting new initiatives in training and service delivery, attest to the special comparative advantage which derives both from the intrinsic character of the Commonwealth as an association and from the specific opportunities in education afforded by the conjunction of ministries, intergovernmental and civil society organisations in the Commonwealth family.

**R.1 Ministers, recognising the core function of education in achieving all the MDGs, are invited to:**

- **transmit a message to the next CHOGM calling on Heads of Government to:**
  - **reaffirm the Commonwealth Secretariat mandate to play strong advocacy, brokerage and catalytic roles in education and training;**
  - **encourage the Secretariat to work in partnership with Commonwealth agencies, institutions and professional associations to develop networks and collaboration for sharing resources, good practice, frameworks and standards to help close the gaps in access, inclusion and achievement within and between member countries;**
  - **commit themselves to engage actively in partnerships with NGOs and other civil society organisations in policy development, implementation and monitoring in education.**

**B. ACCESS, INCLUSION, ACHIEVEMENT – CLOSING THE GAPS**

6. The CCfE interprets the Commonwealth's interest in access, inclusion and achievement widely, to include levels and types of education beyond the basic level, including secondary and higher education. Secondary education is part of basic education for many countries; the availability of secondary places is a powerful stimulus for primary-school attendance, just as absence of it is a deterrent; for many Commonwealth countries that have achieved EFA, a major current preoccupation is to grapple with providing adequate secondary and upper secondary education.
7. A number of important issues cut across primary and secondary levels and are best dealt with through an integrated approach. One of these is the supply of and demand for

teachers: questions of recruitment, retention and migration; teacher training and professional support; shortages of teachers in all areas and especially in science and mathematics.

8. The importance of the teaching profession to the delivery of good quality education cannot be over-stated. At the Commonwealth level, a number of associations deal with aspects of teaching, the curriculum and management<sup>2</sup>, but there would be considerable benefit in the formation of a Commonwealth professional association representing the teaching profession as a whole. Such a body could provide an important voice for this crucial element of the sector, playing roles in advocacy, professional development, sharing of experiences and developing partnerships with ministries and the official Commonwealth organisations. It is understood that moves are now being made to create a Commonwealth teachers' association and Ministers are invited to commit themselves to giving encouragement and to working with it in close partnership. One important area in which there could be such close engagement is in the development of the proposed Protocol on the Recruitment of Commonwealth Teachers. This should balance the interests of recruiting and source countries, as well as the rights of individuals. The Commonwealth values of transparency, fairness, and reciprocity that the parallel Commonwealth Code of Practice for Migration of Health Personnel seeks to promote, should equally be the foundation of Commonwealth practice in respect of the recruitment of teachers, building on the 2002 Savannah Accord<sup>3</sup>.

## Access

9. The latest Education for All (EFA) assessment<sup>4</sup> evaluates the progress of 154 countries towards the 2015 education targets relating to universal primary enrolment, 50% improvement in adult literacy and reaching gender parity. This assessment indicates that:
  - of 83 countries that have already achieved or have a high chance of achieving all three goals, 19 are in the Commonwealth<sup>5</sup>, with a combined population of around 150 million;
  - of 43 countries which are likely to miss at least one goal, 18 are in the Commonwealth<sup>6</sup>, with a combined population of nearly 300 million;
  - of 28 countries at serious risk of not achieving even one of the goals, 6 are in the Commonwealth<sup>7</sup>, with a combined population of nearly 1.3 billion.Thus, over 85% of the Commonwealth's population (1.8 billion) are living in countries that are likely to miss at least one of the three education targets, and over 70% are at serious risk of not achieving even one. Moreover, in many countries, the quality of education remains poor or has even deteriorated in recent years. Faced with these challenges, the Commonwealth should utilise all of its resources, including those afforded by COL's capacities in open and distance learning; by the Commonwealth Secretariat's experience in advocacy, brokerage and catalytic roles and in fostering partnerships

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<sup>2</sup> For example, the League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers; the Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology and Mathematics Educators; the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management.

<sup>3</sup> The Commonwealth Secretariat organised a meeting of Ministers of Education of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States and Barbados (Savannah Hotel, July 2002) which resulted in the signing of the 'Savannah Accord'. It called for research at the national level to determine the extent of "teacher loss and the impact on the education system". UNESCO, 2002. EFA Global Monitoring Report 2002: Education for All – Is the World On Track? Paris, UNESCO.

<sup>4</sup> Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Canada, Cyprus, Fiji, Guyana, Malaysia, Maldives, New Zealand, Niue, Samoa, Seychelles, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, Vanuatu, Zimbabwe

<sup>5</sup> Bangladesh, Botswana, Dominica, Gambia, Ghana, Granada, Jamaica, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Uganda, UR Tanzania

<sup>6</sup> Cameroon, India, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Zambia

between governments and their local and international development partners; and by the diverse capabilities and talents represented by the Commonwealth professional associations and NGOs.

10. The World Bank's EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI), launched in 2002, attempts to define, and secure, the extra external resources needed to achieve EFA within the 2015 timeframe. It also challenges the participating countries to reform the structure, funding, organisation and deployment of the teaching profession, and to expand and reform the teacher training system, using flexible<sup>8</sup> as well as conventional methodologies. Cooperation with the teaching profession will be vital if the FTI is not to be stalled by resistance to change. Commonwealth experiences of successful processes of reform and of productive partnerships between government and civil society should be drawn upon.
11. As noted in the Secretariat's Concept Paper, *'in general, distance learning has tremendous potential in extending access and inclusion in education, and can also be a vehicle for improving education quality by the wider dissemination of excellent materials and teaching... The Commonwealth has particularly deep experience in the use of distance learning provision to extend education opportunity, with the Commonwealth of Learning in the vanguard of co-operative efforts.'* In continuing to play this leading role, COL needs to avoid its efforts becoming diluted through over-involvement in practice, its greatest potential value being in (i) promoting policy-orientated research undertaken and owned locally, (ii) working within the Ministries and donors to advocate the use of appropriate open, distance and flexible learning (ODFL) and (iii) enabling training and research organisations and NGOs to lead the capacity building and human resource development<sup>9</sup>. COL and the Secretariat should work closely together to assist governments to develop and implement policies and strategies for integration of ODFL into mainstream educational provision, ensuring that ODFL's importance is fully reflected in SWApS and other national and sectoral plans.

## **R.2 Ministers are invited to:**

- **Urge that the Commonwealth utilise all of its resources, including those of the Commonwealth Secretariat, COL and the Commonwealth professional associations and NGOs, to reach the MDG education targets.**
- **Recognise the great benefit that would flow from the formation of a Commonwealth teachers' association and commit to working with it in close partnership to improve educational access, quality and relevance.**
- **Work in close collaboration with teachers to develop a Protocol on the Recruitment of Commonwealth Teachers.**
- **Encourage COL and the Commonwealth Secretariat to work even more closely together to assist governments to develop and implement policies and strategies for integration of open, distance and flexible learning into mainstream educational provision; ensure that ODFL's importance is fully reflected in SWApS and other national and sectoral plans; seek the support of Commonwealth and other multilateral and bilateral development partners for building capacity in this area in education ministries.**

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<sup>8</sup> 'Flexible' education involves modes of delivery designed to suit the needs of the learners. As learners need greater flexibility, the techniques and practices of distance educators and colleagues in the mainstream are blending, so there is 'mix and match' or even convergence.

<sup>9</sup> e.g. COL has a major role in the Federation of Commonwealth Distance and Open Learning Associations, FOCODLA

## Inclusion

12. It is estimated<sup>10</sup> that, of 67 countries which have not yet achieved gender parity in primary and secondary enrolments, only 18 have a good chance of doing so even by 2015, let alone 2005. Some key international agencies such as UNICEF, which leads the UN Girls' Education Initiative, are now trying to make rapid, demonstrable progress in selected areas to sustain and encourage greater effort. A sensible and sensitive focusing on local situations is now urgently needed, with realistic targets for different countries.
13. The Halifax Statement recognised that while there is a deficit of girls enrolling in primary education across Asia and Africa, there are regions (e.g. parts of southern Africa) in which young boys are predominant among those deprived of schooling. At secondary level, for nearly all countries where Gross Enrolment Ratios are above 40%, there are more girls than boys in secondary school and their performance is generally better than that of boys. In many of these countries, the phenomena of male under-achievement, drop-out and anti-social behaviour are becoming an increasing concern. Clearly, the strenuous efforts needed to achieve the gender parity MD Goal must be accompanied by a much more sophisticated analysis of gender issues in society and by development of a better understanding of the links between education, gender and poverty. The Commonwealth Secretariat should continue to play a stimulating and coordinating role, drawing together the intellectual resources and practical experiences of governments, research and teaching institutions and civil society organisations to understand and address the underlying causes of these gender disparities in education.
14. If EFA does mean education for ALL, it must include children with disabilities<sup>11</sup>, those traumatised by conflict and orphaned, and those who are currently denied access on racial, ethnic, health, social or economic grounds, linguistic and cultural minorities, refugees, migrants, nomads and travellers. Schools will have to redefine their purpose as being 'inclusive education', and all teachers will have to be trained and professionally supported to teach learners with a wider range of abilities and circumstances, including those affected by HIV/AIDS, and not to exclude or marginalise any pupils on grounds of a narrowly-defined set of eligibility criteria. It is also vital to encourage the understanding and active support of the whole of civil society. Examples of remarkable results being achieved through close partnership between local education authorities, schools and the community provide a model not only of good practice for inclusion, but also for improving overall quality, relevance, accountability and community participation<sup>12</sup>. The Secretariat should be encouraged to highlight and promote good practice in inclusive education across the Commonwealth.

### R.3 Ministers are invited to:

- **Request the Commonwealth Secretariat and its partners to continue promoting gender parity at all levels of education and better understanding of the underlying causes of gender disparities in education, in the context of the varying circumstances and needs of different regions of the Commonwealth.**

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<sup>10</sup> See Reference 2

<sup>11</sup> On average, about 10% of the population in developing countries suffer significant disabilities. Only about 3% of these people are literate (about twice as many male as female).

<sup>12</sup> An example is the Commonwealth's school improvement programme in small states (SIPSS).

- **Encourage the Secretariat to highlight and promote good practice in inclusive education, defined in the broadest sense, throughout the Commonwealth.**

## **Achievement**

15. Measuring learning achievement is crucial for monitoring the relative quality of individual components of the education system and overall education standards. It provides evidence of knowledge and competencies that are essential for individual employment and national competitiveness in the global marketplace, and underpins the mobility of students, labour and jobs. There is also need for extending academic systems of assessment to take fuller account of technical and vocational skills. This points to the need for an international system of recognition and accreditation of learning achievement. The Commonwealth is well placed to develop such a system, through collaboration involving the Commonwealth Secretariat, Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) and Association of Commonwealth Examination and Accreditation Bodies (ACEAB). Two possibilities, which are not mutually exclusive, are worth exploring as approaches to providing portable and internationally recognised accreditation for a wide range of learning and skills:
- i. development of a Commonwealth Qualifications Framework (which would include teacher education qualifications gained through ODFL modalities), by building on the experiences of a number of National Qualifications Frameworks and on work that has been initiated by the Association of Commonwealth Examination and Accreditation Bodies; and
  - ii. creation of a Commonwealth Baccalaureate, by building on the experiences of, and current trends and discussions in a number of Commonwealth countries.

### **R.4 Ministers are invited to:**

- **Request the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the Association of Commonwealth Examination and Accreditation Bodies to collaborate in exploring: (i) development of a Commonwealth Qualifications Framework; and (ii) creation of a Commonwealth Baccalaureate.**

## **C. HIV/AIDS**

16. Education has a critical role to play in addressing the global emergency of HIV/AIDS. Moreover, in high-prevalence countries, which are predominantly in the Commonwealth, emergency measures may be needed to prevent collapse of education systems. This might include, for example, fast-track approaches to teacher induction; more reliance on volunteers and NGOs to keep schools functioning; massive use of distance education to provide quality lessons through broadcasting on radio, TV and, where available, through use of classroom computers and the internet; multi-shift schooling and multi-grade teaching to make the most efficient use of the available teaching resources; expansion in the use of non-formal education to reach the children who, for various reasons, are unable to attend school; re-focusing of curricula to prioritise transmission of the most valuable and critical life skills. Open, distance and flexible learning can assist through
- non-formal education that reaches into the community;
  - open schooling systems that cater for adolescents, including orphans, child heads of household, carers and those infected with HIV



- supporting teaching in the classroom through delivery of high-quality lessons;
- in-service teacher training, professional development and teacher support. COL should be encouraged to expand its work in supporting the use of ODFL wherever possible in combating HIV/AIDS.

17. Many Commonwealth NGOs and professional associations, individually and also collectively through the Para55 Group, are doing important work to support the education sector's efforts to counter HIV/AIDS. Thus, CASTME has prepared teaching materials about HIV/AIDS for primary schools and village or community education in West Africa, and is now evaluating these in collaboration with the Secretariat; ACU is working with and through its member universities to examine, and devise strategies to pre-empt, the potentially devastating impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the universities themselves, the communities they serve, and on national and regional economic development. These are important examples of the 'all hands to the pump' principle and the Secretariat should be mandated to intensify its advocacy, brokerage and catalytic roles concerning education and HIV/AIDS, in part through strengthening its liaison and co-ordinating roles with the Commonwealth's professional and specialist organisations in education.

#### **R.5 Ministers are invited to:**

- **Recommend to Commonwealth Heads of Government that the 'AIDS vaccine' of education should be accorded very high priority, alongside measures in the health sector, in combating HIV/AIDS and mitigating its effects;**
- **Request the Secretariat and COL to intensify their efforts to develop, promote and disseminate good practice in policies and strategies for the education sector to respond to HIV/AIDS;**
- **Request the Commonwealth Secretariat and COL to work with partners to identify and disseminate examples of good practice in the design and use of curricula, teaching materials and school-based initiatives to protect young people from HIV/AIDS infection and to strengthen their resilience in face of its impact.**

## **D. HIGHER EDUCATION**

### **Human resource development and advancing the MDGs**

18. There is now renewed emphasis<sup>13-14</sup> on the importance of higher education for national as well as personal development, for achieving the MDGs and for combating challenges such as HIV/AIDS. Higher education promotes a country's economic growth and vitality; reduces poverty; closes the knowledge gap, boosting the opportunities for trade, exchange and improved understanding between richer and poorer countries; trains and inspires the teachers and school principals who will develop and sustain the basic and secondary levels of education to which the MDGs aspire; develops the next generation of professional, industrial, commercial and political leaders.

19. The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP), launched in 1959 at the first Commonwealth Education Conference in Oxford, has been experimenting in the last few years with new modalities. In particular, Canada has funded a number of distance education scholarships through COL, linking Canadian and Caribbean institutions. The

<sup>13</sup> World Bank, 2002. *Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education*.

<sup>14</sup> Bourne, R. (Ed), 2000. *Universities and Development*. London, Association of Commonwealth Universities

UK's Commonwealth Scholarship Commission has followed suit, with increased support from DFID, creating a number of Distance Learning Awards<sup>15</sup>. At least 10 courses have already been approved, each linking a UK tertiary institution with one in a developing country in the Commonwealth. It is expected that a new cohort of 120 students will register for the 2003/04 session. The UK has also encouraged diversification in the duration of postgraduate awards, short fellowships for mid-career professionals, and split-site and jointly supervised degrees. While the UK and Canada remain by far the biggest donors to the CSFP, a particularly encouraging feature of the past three years has been the growth in the numbers of new awards and of countries offering to host them. The willingness of institutions in countries such as Cameroon, Malaysia and South Africa to commit resources, even in a small way, underscores the nature of the Plan as a genuinely Commonwealth-wide venture. These major evolutionary changes signify that, although needs have changed since the Plan was established over 40 years ago, it has sufficient flexibility to respond to new challenges. Commonwealth Heads of Government and Ministers of Education should actively encourage all members of the Commonwealth with higher education institutions to participate actively in the Plan as donors of awards.

20. Another important area that deserves further development is to mobilise interest and influence through an association of the 22,000 former award holders. This group has real potential to form a 'community' of expertise supportive of Commonwealth values and programmes – particularly given the evidence that many alumni have risen to positions of leadership. The ACU should vigorously pursue its work to trace and record former award holders as a basis for an alumni association.

### **Borderless higher education**

21. 'Borderless higher education' - crossing geographical, sectoral and conceptual boundaries - involves education delivered via virtual, corporate and for-profit universities, and through a wide range of partnerships between higher education and the private sector<sup>16</sup>. There are both opportunities and risks in these new organisational models. The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education<sup>17</sup>, based at ACU, was established to track borderless developments and now has over 120 institutional subscribers from more than a dozen countries. In this fast-moving, complex territory, new developments (e.g. in teaching and learning, technology and partnerships) are occurring every day. Yet an awareness of developments is essential for strategic planning, both at institutional and governmental levels. The Secretariat and COL, in collaboration with ACU, should keep a watching brief on this field – for example, developments in areas such as e-learning, growth in private and corporate education, developing markets and international collaboration, and their impacts on education in small states, gender parity in higher education, and the competitiveness and standards of national tertiary education institutions – and report to Ministers from time to time on the policy implications.

### **R.6 Ministers are invited to:**

- **Encourage the ACU to play a leading role in identifying and strengthening the development functions of its member universities and their contributions to**

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<sup>15</sup> See [www.csfp-online.org](http://www.csfp-online.org)

<sup>16</sup> See [www.obhe.ac.uk](http://www.obhe.ac.uk) for further information on borderless education.

<sup>17</sup> In 2000, the report (downloadable at [www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/bookshop/HowToOrder.asp?Code=20](http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/bookshop/HowToOrder.asp?Code=20)) 'The Business of Borderless Education', jointly sponsored by Universities UK and the Higher Education Funding Council for England, was published. An Observatory ([www.obhe.ac.uk](http://www.obhe.ac.uk) - a strategic information service, first sponsored by the Association of Commonwealth Universities and Universities UK) was established as one of its recommendations.

meeting the MDGs; and to work, in partnership with the Secretariat and others, to strengthen the capacities of universities to respond to HIV/AIDS.

- Encourage the ACU to continue its tracking of former CSFP awardees and its efforts to establish an alumni association; and commit themselves to the further expansion of the CSFP as a valuable and flexible scheme that responds to the changing needs of the Commonwealth.
- Commend the ACU and the Commonwealth Secretariat for their excellent work in promoting gender equity in higher education, particularly through enhancing the profile of, and opportunities for, women in higher education management by publishing training materials and guides to good practice, and running workshops across the Commonwealth with the aim of training participants to deliver management development programmes for women in their own institutions; and encourage the continuation and further development of this work, with an emphasis on changing the culture of institutions.
- Request the ACU and COL, in collaboration with the Secretariat, to keep a watching brief on borderless higher education and particularly its impacts on education in small states, gender parity in higher education, and the competitiveness and standards of national tertiary education institutions, and to report to Ministers from time to time on the policy implications.

## **E. MEETING THE DISTINCTIVE NEEDS OF SMALL STATES**

22. *“The world’s small island developing states are front-line zones where, in concentrated form, many of the main problems of environment and development are unfolding”* (Kofi Annan, New York, September 1999)<sup>18</sup>. The Commonwealth has made major contributions to thinking and development co-operation relating to the distinctive educational and human resource development needs of small states<sup>19</sup>, where questions of access, inclusion and achievement, often have different implications and require context-sensitive interpretations. Similarly, the work of the School Improvement Programme in Small States (SIPSS) on raising quality has implications far beyond the confines of small states. The Secretariat should be encouraged to sustain a strong programme on education in small states and to ensure the wide dissemination and application of the lessons learned.
23. At 14CCEM, Ministers requested COL to pursue the possibility of establishing a Virtual University for Small States. The proposed Virtual University is an initiative that reflects small states’ tertiary education needs and priorities – and one fully compatible with parallel strategies to enhance local research and evaluation capacity. With the emergence of the knowledge economy, the strategic role of this work, and of on tertiary education within small states and across the Commonwealth as a whole, is greatly increased.

### **R.7 Ministers are invited to:**

- Encourage the Secretariat to sustain a strong programme on education in small states and to ensure the wide dissemination and application of the lessons learned.

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<sup>18</sup> Cited in: UNESCO (2003) ‘UNESCO and Small Island Developing States. Towards Barbados + 10/Mauritius 2004’, Paris: UNESCO.

<sup>19</sup> Crossley, M and Holmes, K (1999) *Educational Development in the Small States of the Commonwealth*, London: Commonwealth Secretariat

- **Consider the feasibility of the proposed Virtual University for Small States.**

## **F. EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP**

24. As recognised in the Halifax Statement, education should promote values of democracy, human rights, tolerance and peace. This role is especially important in countries where education is conducted in difficult circumstances, where there are armed conflicts, natural disasters and where normal education is disrupted for various reasons. Education is vital to the development of the capacities of individual citizens to participate in the processes of democracy and to sustaining the environment of a ‘culture of good governance’ in which they can operate. The importance of fostering these capacities is increasingly being reflected in many national and agency education policies, whether categorised as ‘Commonwealth Values’ or ‘Citizenship’, and is within the remit of the Secretariat and several Commonwealth education NGOs. These organisations should be encouraged to collaborate more closely in this area of fundamental importance to the existence and meaning of the Commonwealth, identifying and disseminating best practice and promoting the creation of suitable resource materials and teaching/learning methodologies for use across the Commonwealth.

### **R.8 Ministers are invited to:**

- **Request the Secretariat to continue its work on citizenship and values education, in partnership with other agencies and institutions, identifying and disseminating best practice and promoting the creation of suitable resource materials and teaching/learning methodologies for use across the Commonwealth.**

## **G. COMMONWEALTH STUDIES**

25. Following the Symons Report in 1996, progress in developing the field of Commonwealth Studies has been disappointingly slow. However, 2003 has seen the inaugural international conference of the Association for Commonwealth Studies in Canada, a special conference on Education about the Commonwealth convened by the Royal Commonwealth Society and Council for Education in the Commonwealth, the change of focus of the Commonwealth Institute and the creation of a Centre for Commonwealth Education in Cambridge. These, and longer established bodies such as the ACU, the Commonwealth Policy Study Unit (CPSU) and the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, together with the academic communities in member countries, should be encouraged and supported to develop momentum in establishing Commonwealth Studies as a strong and vibrant field of scholarship and research, and to facilitate education about the Commonwealth at school level.

### **R.9 Ministers are invited to:**

- **Encourage the relevant Commonwealth bodies, including the Association for Commonwealth Studies, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, ACU, CPSU and new Centre for Commonwealth Education, to develop and support scholarship and research in the field of Commonwealth Studies and education about the Commonwealth in schools.**

## **H. THE EDUCATION WORK OF THE COMMONWEALTH AND ITS ASSOCIATIONS**

26. The Secretariat's Education Section is very small and must play to its strengths, concentrating on its advocacy, brokerage and catalytic roles. Despite its limited human and financial resources, it has done pioneering work in several areas, including small states, distance education and teacher management and support. It has been successful in attracting money from multilateral and bilateral donors for its own programmes (e.g. through its leadership roles in ADEA working groups) and in helping member states to access such resources. It has played generating and incubation roles in the establishment of a variety of Commonwealth organisations (e.g. Association of Commonwealth Examination and Accreditation Bodies, CHEMS, COL, CASTME, CAPA). It is also serving its central function in seeking to advance and protect the global public interest in such areas as the General Agreement on trade in Services (GATS), copyright, mobility and brain drain where the different perspectives of industrialised and developing countries need accommodation.
27. In order to improve continuity and effectiveness, it seems desirable to create mechanisms for Ministers to take ownership of the policy and programme proposals they make in ministerial conferences. This should mean that governments commit themselves to carrying out the intentions expressed at Commonwealth Ministers' Conferences, with Ministers ensuring that the necessary resources are made available both in their own countries and through the Secretariat. It should also mean that Ministers devise ways of exercising oversight of the implementation of their decisions between conferences. A small representative group of four to six ministers could be established to monitor implementation and to advise and assist the Secretariat's Education Section in giving effect to ministerial mandates. Much of the work might be done electronically, and where face-to-face meetings were needed they could be arranged in the wings of other gatherings at UNESCO or elsewhere. Such professional and political advice could be of great benefit to Secretariat programmes .
28. At a time of severe funding constraints, the Secretariat must increasingly out-source the advice it needs rather than using in-house expertise. In the past, many of the most far-reaching initiatives in Commonwealth education co-operation - e.g. on Student Mobility and Higher Education Co-operation, and the creation of COL - were developed by groups of high-level experts appointed by the Secretary-General and serviced by the Commonwealth Secretariat. We urge Ministers and the Secretariat to consider recourse to this device of consultative groups in future as a way of enhancing the in-house capacity of the Commonwealth Secretariat.
29. While the Commonwealth NGOs that are active in education vary greatly in size and functional capacities, they share a common commitment to supporting the Commonwealth's efforts to advance educational development in member countries. Some of the larger NGOs can commit financial and staff resources to co-operative partnerships and can serve as executing agencies for officially-funded programmes. What smaller ones may be able to offer is the time, experience and ideas of their members, normally on a voluntary basis. It will be helpful to civil society organisations if they can be guided as to the priorities for Commonwealth action and the areas where they can most usefully make a contribution, often in partnership with others, thus avoiding unnecessary fragmentation of effort. What is ideally needed is a Framework for Co-operative Action

in Education, to guide the efforts of the Commonwealth's official bodies and voluntary associations over the next triennium.

30. An important new example of government-civil society partnership is the Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF) established by the UK government in 2002. This is assisting local civil society organisations in 17 Commonwealth countries<sup>20</sup> to gain a more effective voice and stronger participation in EFA, PRSPs, SWAs, etc. The CEF is an extremely welcome initiative to ensure that channels are strengthened for civil society to participate in policy development, implementation and monitoring in education, and this approach should be extended throughout the Commonwealth.

**R.10 Ministers are invited to:**

- **Encourage the Secretariat to sustain its support for the Education Section, which should continue to develop its focus on advocacy, brokerage and catalysis; request the Education Section to continue its creative efforts to attract external funding for its work and to assist member states to access development assistance.**
- **Ensure that the necessary resources are made available, both in their own countries and through the Secretariat, for the implementation of their decisions.**
- **Consider the establishment of a small, representative group of ministers to advise and assist the Secretariat's Education Section in giving effect to ministerial mandates and to monitor implementation.**
- **Encourage the Secretary-General to appoint high-level consultative groups of experts to assist the Secretariat, where appropriate, by enhancing the in-house capacity for examining issues and developing initiatives in education. One such area for possible action now could be to develop a Framework for Co-operative Action in Education, to guide the efforts of the Commonwealth's official bodies and voluntary associations over the next triennium.**
- **Welcome the establishment of the Commonwealth Education Fund and encourage the development of further initiatives of this kind in the Commonwealth.**

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<sup>20</sup> Bangladesh, Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

## Commonwealth Consortium for Education

The Commonwealth Consortium for Education has been established by a group of education-related Commonwealth NGOs, to co-ordinate their efforts on behalf of Commonwealth education, to stimulate more coherence in their work and to provide a collective mechanism for interaction with ministries and official Commonwealth organisations.

Founder members of CCfE are the Association of Commonwealth Examination and Accreditation Bodies, the Association of Commonwealth Studies, the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum, the Commonwealth Association for Science Technology and Mathematics Educators, the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management, the Commonwealth Countries' League, the Council for Education in the Commonwealth, the English-Speaking Union of the Commonwealth, the Federation of Commonwealth Open and Distance Learning Associations, the Institute of Commonwealth Studies (and Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit), and the League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers. Full membership of the Consortium is open to all those Commonwealth NGOs that have as their central concern education, culture and youth. Other groups with a core interest in education and a concern with Commonwealth education are eligible for associate membership.

The objectives of the Consortium are

(1) *to promote the development of education throughout the Commonwealth by:*

- mobilising the contribution of education-based NGOs
- generating support for Commonwealth institutions and programmes in education
- assisting Commonwealth agencies to draw on NGO resources and expertise
- contributing to the formulation of policies on Commonwealth educational co-operation
- developing and disseminating models of good practice in education
- encouraging education professionals to become engaged with the challenges of Commonwealth educational development
- monitoring the implementation of Commonwealth education policy.

(2) *to constitute a forum to promote co-operation by members through:*

- better articulation of the interests and views of Commonwealth voluntary and professional bodies working in the education sector
- co-operative activities on behalf of educational development in the Commonwealth
- exchange of information and experience between members
- sharing of representation, services and facilities at Commonwealth and other events.

The Consortium will hold its inaugural Conference in Edinburgh on October 24 and 25. Initial activities focused on representations to Commonwealth Governments about the place of education in future Commonwealth priorities and programmes at the time of the Coolum summit meeting in 2002. Briefing notes on Commonwealth education co-operation are in preparation. A calendar of events in Commonwealth education has been circulated and will be updated regularly. Future joint activities of the Commonwealth Consortium for Education are expected to include development action, advocacy, information sharing, and research and development of policy. A particular concern is to promote education about the Commonwealth, and its fundamental values of democracy, tolerance and respect for diversity. The group will constitute a forum that will promote co-operation between members. In the context of the Conferences of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEMs) and CHOGMs it aims to mobilise support for education co-operation programmes, working closely with official Commonwealth bodies, national governments and agencies, and other NGOs.

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