

19th Commonwealth Conference of Education Ministers, Bahamas, June 2015

Stakeholder Forum Statement to Ministers

Seizing the moment

As the international community launches a new set of global goals, the Commonwealth must define and communicate its agenda.

In 2012, the Commonwealth's post-2015 framework for education achieved international recognition for leading the way in the global negotiations on the sustainable development agenda.

Despite positive progress, the ambition of Ministers at 18CCEM to expand the Commonwealth's contribution and capacity in education have not been met. Outputs and resources have been reduced.

A clear Commonwealth position

We urge Ministers to use the proposed Commonwealth Accelerated Development Mechanism for Education (CADME) as a working platform to determine Commonwealth priorities for the implementation of the SDGs. The process should produce a realistic and deliverable mandate for the Commonwealth Secretariat. As stakeholders in Commonwealth education we anticipate full involvement in these processes and undertake to make available our technical support and knowledge.

The Commonwealth is not making the most of its access to international forums and convening power. We recommend that Ministers work strategically to communicate a Commonwealth agenda on international, regional and national platforms.

The CCEM is in need of urgent reform to ensure that meetings are fit for purpose and able to compete with other international education forums. The CCEM structure should enable significantly more direct interaction between all participants. In line with international best practice, we recommend that the Commonwealth Secretariat's Health & Education Unit undertake a comprehensive assessment of 19CCEM, obtaining Ministers' and all stakeholders' views on the structure, format and level of engagement with non-State actors. Each CCEM should instigate a three year cycle of activity. Reports monitoring performance against commitments should be published annually.

Pathways to quality and equity

We call upon governments to honour the commitments made in the SDGs, including through the provision of essential international and domestic finance as recommended by the Incheon Declaration.

We urge Ministers to use the Commonwealth's comparative advantage in furthering the SDG agenda, for example: ensuring that small state interests are promoted; that the potential contribution of higher education is maximised; and in each case, drawing upon the Commonwealth's unique membership to give stronger voice to its less developed or fragile members.

The Commonwealth's diverse networks, internationally shared experience and values are well-suited to multi-stakeholder partnerships for educational delivery. We ask Ministers to facilitate and explore opportunities for collaboration at Commonwealth, regional and national levels.

Recognising the interdependence of education and other areas of social development, we call upon Ministers to adopt an integrated multi-sectoral approach to promote education holistically in keeping with the new SDGs.

In keeping with the spirit of Commonwealth co-operation, we affirm the recommendations of the civil society Small States pre-conference meeting.

The Commonwealth's varied membership reflects the full range of international challenges and opportunities, giving it a key role to play in furthering the global agenda. The opportunity is there for the Commonwealth family to lead the way.