



London Declaration on Inclusive Governance for a Renewed Commonwealth

April 2018

1. This London Declaration on Inclusive Governance for a Renewed Commonwealth is the outcome statement of the Commonwealth Peoples' Forum 2018 (CPF 2018), held from 16-18 April 2018. Representing the outcomes of 28 sessions, including policy dialogues, plenary and panel sessions, it describes the perspectives, insights and outcomes of discussions of over 250 Commonwealth civil society participants and sets out several practical action steps for Commonwealth Heads of Government, Commonwealth Member States, Commonwealth bodies and civil society.

2. Participants reflected that the size and diversity of the Commonwealth is extraordinarily rich, with a global citizenry of over 2.4 billion, one third of humanity, living in 53 countries, including the majority of the world's poorest, smallest and most vulnerable countries. We celebrated the Commonwealth's common value of equality, and our common history of accomplishments, in strengthening civic space, voice and role in decision-making and in fostering collaborative, consensus-based mutual support to countries, societies and people across the Commonwealth.

3. But we also acknowledged the stark, acute challenges we all face in eradicating poverty and discrimination, in achieving equitable and quality education and health care, in attaining sustainable development, and addressing economic, gender and social inequalities, in confronting and banishing exclusion and injustice, in securing democratic, inclusive and participatory governance and in realizing the enormous untapped potential of the contemporary Commonwealth, for our citizens and as a global force for good. Commonwealth civic voice is central to this task. And Commonwealth renewal is no longer an option, but an achievable imperative. We will pay particular attention to the challenges of small and disadvantaged countries. For the Commonwealth our future is greater than our past and we will leave no-one behind.

4. Through persistent expression of our Commonwealth civic voice, constructive participation in decision-making, determination to challenge dominant narratives of exclusion, insisting on accountability in governance, identifying new and innovative pathways to Commonwealth renewal and working collaboratively with and across Commonwealth organisations in conveying shared views and suggestions for renewal, we will pursue the future we want. We submit our Commonwealth People's Forum **Call to Action – Inclusive Governance for a Renewed Commonwealth**.

Exclusion in the Commonwealth: A Path to Renewal

5. Inclusion is crucial to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. But exclusion has become accepted across the Commonwealth, through injustice, discrimination and exclusion of rights among marginalised majorities like women, poor and vulnerable communities and societies. Minorities across the Commonwealth, in particular, people at the intersection of several inequalities still struggle for visibility, respect and full rights. Minority status should not mean denial of rights. Case studies of the lived experience of communities that face exclusion compellingly illustrate that new approaches are needed, to enable inclusion to become the norm. Civic voices call on the Commonwealth to work collectively to: end exclusion, tackle

injustice and inequality, including gender inequality, and commit to transparency and accountability.

6. Building inclusive, transparent and accountable governance, institutions and decision-making processes, that include all marginalized communities and individuals in decision-making and adherence to the Commonwealth Charter, with its strong emphasis on human rights, are crucial building blocks for Commonwealth inclusion. Ending exclusion also necessitates greater accountability, legislative reform, honesty and transparent governance.

7. The task of erasing exclusion also confers international responsibilities, to reverse the institutional and human legacy of unjust legislation and an economic system that entrenched exclusion, discrimination and inequality; and to encourage inclusive governance in international discourse and relations.

Reimagining Migration

8. Migration contributes to building inclusive and resilient societies. But increasingly, contemporary discourse on migration dehumanises migrants, denies migrants basic human rights, and hinges on a fear of the migrant, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable migrants as the 'other', with the term migrant intersecting increasingly emphatically with social class and ethnicity. More inclusive governance can contribute to reframing this narrative, affording priority to the safety and security of all migrants irrespective of status and ensuring access to services, while encouraging positive actions that humanise migrants, their lives and their experiences.

9. Better-resourced local and municipal governments, where migrants have their closest connections to government and access to services, can also support this process, including expanded programmes of education and awareness of available services, access to these and assistance with integration into local communities. Governments in home countries can also play a stronger role in educating migrants about the consequences of migration and their rights as migrants and extend basic services provision to the children of migrants. The Commonwealth should also play a critical role, in encouraging the exchange of experiences of migration, good and bad practice and in ensuring safe spaces for greater conversation and interaction between host communities and migrants.

10. The denial of rights and the treatment of migrants and refugees in many parts of the Commonwealth compound exclusion. Detention serves no purpose in asylum processes, breeds distrust of the asylum process itself, is unduly costly and damages the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to integrate due to their traumatic experiences. Indefinite detention of asylum seekers is tantamount to mental torture and should be abolished as a practice across all Commonwealth countries. Other practical steps to limit the multiple adverse impacts of detention include establishing a maximum limit on detention periods and ensuring that adults at risk and children cannot be detained.

11. We must reimagine migration. Across the Commonwealth, civil society calls for: (i) An end to the practices of indefinite detention of asylum seekers anywhere in the Commonwealth. There must be a maximum limit on detention and no adults at risk or children detained; and (ii) Better-resourced local and municipal governments, providing migrants with expanded service provision programmes including integration in local communities.

Women Negotiating Peace

12. Women bear the heaviest burden of war through sexual violence and displacement but are rarely in positions of authority in peace processes, although women are responsible for safeguarding the children and elderly during wartime violence. Women have a stake in the process, including rights to justice and reparations. Their presence and inclusion in negotiating peace is an essential part of all peace processes if they are to be sustainable, inclusive. Involvement of women contributes to dissolving patriarchal structures, which are often reinforced by propaganda and sexist messages. Through processes of engagement, taking responsibility for the family listening and hearing, women bring different perspectives and dynamics to negotiation processes and also play an important role in sustaining peace in local communities.

13. Civil society calls on all Commonwealth governments: (i) To strengthen women's roles in negotiating peace, at both national and local levels; and (ii) to appoint more women in positions of authority in peace negotiations.

Legislative Reform in the Commonwealth

14. An increasing number of Commonwealth governments are reforming colonial-era laws relating to sexual orientation, gender identity and mental health. These laws have contributed to exclusion, discrimination, criminalization of same sex relations between adults, and denial of mental health rights and care. New inclusive rights-based laws, meeting international standards of human rights, inclusiveness and accountability, are increasingly replacing these. Across the Commonwealth it is increasingly important to review laws that do not bring about accountability of power and which perpetuate discrimination based on beliefs and fears.

15. While strategies to overcome domestic resistance to reform have differed widely, inclusion and participation in redrafting legislation by those most affected, civil society engagement, government leadership and developing a focused agenda and purpose for reforms have all been common features in successful legislative reform initiatives.

16. Building on these experiences, civil society calls on all Commonwealth Governments to accelerate legislative reform that: (i) Respects human rights and provides access to mental health care, drawing on best practice from the World Health Organisation and from other Commonwealth countries; (ii) Decriminalises consensual same sex relations between adults and removes other discriminatory provisions from laws and (iii) Ends impunity on gender based violence. Commonwealth governments and civil society should also work together to play a stronger catalytic role in accelerating legislative reforms, by strengthening community education and the education of politicians, lawmakers and security forces including the police and military, on the purposes and advantages of reform and by enhancing participation and inclusion of communities most discriminated against by colonial-era laws.

Inclusive Education and Universal Health Care

17. Inclusive education is a critical foundation for building inclusive, resilient and successful societies that expand human potential. It empowers learners to become productive, healthy, happy and peaceful, enabling their participation in economic and social development; builds skills; and reduces marginalisation and youth unemployment. Across the Commonwealth, education plays diverse and crucial roles. It sustains development and prosperity, hence the importance of gender inclusive quality education as a right in order to meet the Sustainable

Development Goals and global challenges. It supports progress in other areas of key Commonwealth concerns, including women's advancement, combatting extremism, environmental protection and in the strengthening of Commonwealth relationships.

18. Across the Commonwealth, as demand for education grows, multiple barriers remain, as identified by the 2018 Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CEMM). This includes limited and inequitable access to educational facilities, including for persons with disabilities, poor and uneven educational quality, inadequate infrastructure, language barriers, poverty and education costs, all of which constrain access to inclusive education and perpetuate exclusion.

19. Several steps are needed to expand access and equity, improve quality and reduce the costs of education. These include wider use of open education resources in local languages that promote the use of free content; socially and culturally appropriate innovative distance and technology-enabled learning in both formal and informal life-long education settings; as well as curriculum reform, including improving transitions to work and TVET provision, to ensure that learning leads to employment and entrepreneurship. The intrinsic value of access to tertiary education and the benefits of student mobility are recognised by Commonwealth countries. Proportionate investment is required to equip higher education systems to produce the next generation of teachers, health care professionals and leaders with the necessary skills and values for inclusive societies, and to deliver research to address pressing local and global challenges.

20. Strengthened educational partnerships that build on the Commonwealth's already well-established track-record of collaborative activity in education, are also needed, echoing the outcomes from the recent Integrated Partners Forum in Fiji to involve civil society voices within accountability mechanisms and have a forward direction, to ensure that no one is left behind.

21. Health care should be a basic human right but increasingly, is no longer within the public space. Health care has become an area of private provision. Despite the discourse around universal health care, the reality is that continued privatisation means that health can be accessed only by those who can afford it. While there is growing public awareness of the escalating challenges posed by non-communicable diseases including cancers, heart disease and mental health, Commonwealth governments need to recognise the links between NCDs and the inequitable social and economic development of our nations and across the globe.

22. Universal Health Care presents a challenge to Commonwealth societies to transform health care provision and to become more responsive to changes in society. They should at the same time recognize such intersectional needs of health care, as improved access to medicines and meeting the needs of marginalised women. Across Commonwealth countries, renewed emphasis is needed to provide essential new born care, maternal health care and to address malnutrition and the health care needs of girls. Health care governance needs to be publicly funded or at the very least, a blended public-private system with public needs at the forefront, with innovative best practices shared across geographies.

23. Inclusive and people-centred education and health systems are critical foundations for just, resilient and sustainable societies. We call on Commonwealth governments to: (i) Reduce the cost of education to learners, make health services accessible to everyone; and (ii) Curb the privatisation of education and health care provision and ensure health care systems put public care at the forefront.

Indigenous Peoples

24. Indigenous Peoples throughout the Commonwealth have confronted persistent, historical, traumatic exclusion and suffering, exacerbated by the denial of citizenship in their own ancestral lands and territories. As minorities in their own nation and excluded constitutionally, Indigenous Peoples face acute difficulties in acquiring jobs, education and in starting businesses and starkly disproportionate vulnerability to adverse health outcomes, early mortality and the right to shelter and summary extrajudicial punishment.

25. Constitutional reform that recognises Indigenous People's land and territories and corrects historical injustice and exclusion, secures a treaty commitment, recognizes Indigenous Peoples as citizens of their own Nation and that includes Indigenous Peoples in designing and developing new approaches to self-determination can reverse exclusion. Commonwealth countries should support these processes by fully enforcing the right to free, prior and informed consent and the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

26. Ownership of their land, territories and resources, the preservation of cultural and linguistic identities and of Indigenous knowledge, are integral the identity of Indigenous Peoples. For the millions of Indigenous Peoples living in Commonwealth countries, colonialism has not ended, but rather has been adopted by post-colonial governments to continuously erode their rights. For Indigenous Peoples, self-determination engenders their right to make their own decisions on issues that affect themselves and their communities, including by challenging government policies that often systematically exclude them. Future declarations on the rights of Indigenous Peoples need to address social, cultural and economic facets of Indigenous People's lives.

27. Civil society calls for reinvigorated attention to the concerns of Indigenous Peoples throughout the Commonwealth. We call for a new Commonwealth agenda that includes: (i) Constitutional reform to recognise Indigenous Peoples' land and territories and correct historical injustice and exclusion; (ii) Recognition of Indigenous Peoples as citizens of their own Nations, free to design and develop new approaches to self-determination; (iii) Enforcement of the right to free, prior and informed consent; (iv) Implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and (v) Initiatives to close the gaps in quality of life measures between Indigenous Peoples and other citizens, including life expectancy, health outcomes, educational achievement, employment levels and incarceration rates.

Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities: Ensuring Access to Justice

28. Across Commonwealth countries, individuals and communities face multiple obstacles in accessing judicial processes, institutions and to resources that enable that access. Exclusion has a disproportionate impact on persons with disabilities, for whom physical access, prejudice, the absence of legal procedures, remedies and facilities represent additional and real impacts of exclusion. Challenges include a lack of information on how to access justice processes, upholding the rule of law, difficulties in finding robust legal assistance and lawyers who understand the rights of persons with disabilities. People with disabilities are not always seen as having rights, so limiting the number of cases filed even in the presence of disability laws.

29. Exclusion and inability to access justice are also exacerbated by a lack of legal aid, costs of transport to attend court proceedings, a lack of interpreters and other tools to communicate in courts, which are typically considered a favour not a right; and constraints on physical access to courts. Persons with disabilities are also regularly prevented from attaining legal training. Several Commonwealth countries also deny constitutional recognition to persons with

disabilities, diminishing their ability to challenge discrimination and exclusion, legal precedents being set and limiting the number of lawyers willing to take up disability cases. Exclusion also results in denial of rights to consent, including to marriage and divorce, to own property, to enter into and to enforce transactions. Exclusion breeds prejudice and legal uncertainty and entrenches ignorance around the constraints facing persons with disabilities.

30. Civil society calls for the establishment of policies in justice systems, that recognize the importance of existing and potential contributions of persons with disabilities in enriching societies, and that: (i) Breakdown legal, financial and institutional barriers that prevent access to justice; (ii) Afford reasonable accommodation to persons with disabilities when accessing the justice system; and (iii) Provide targeted fellowship and legal aid programmes to disadvantaged people and those at risk.

31. Specific steps should include reforming existing laws that deny access to justice; establishing new laws that promote access, strengthening training and education of legal practitioners, including through new Commonwealth initiatives led by the Commonwealth Magistrates and Judges Association; allocating budgets across all national departments to address the needs of persons with disabilities; mainstreaming disability issues in all government departments; and developing education policies that enable persons to know their rights, and understand how the legal system functions and how they can access available legal recourse. Public Human Rights institutions and policies should also recognise rights of persons with disabilities. A new pan-Commonwealth initiative is also needed to examine good practices in legal aid across the Commonwealth, including opportunities to strengthen pro-bono work and to promote transnational partnerships across Commonwealth jurisdictions. The respective roles of the private sector, the media and technology are also critical in strengthening inclusion and access to justice for persons with disabilities.

Institutional Racism

32. Institutional racism both springs from, and serves to perpetuate, systemic deep-rooted exclusion. It differs from individual acts of racism and prejudice. Institutional racism can be challenged and reversed. Changing the policies, behaviours and attitudes of supranational, international, national, regional and local organisations that perpetrate institutional racism is complex and multifaceted

33. Racism is a manifestation of the structure of power and exploitation, which develops and exists in a historical context. Colonisation is also linked to race and other intersecting identities. Institutionalising racism enables its perpetuation and legitimisation, by subjugating those who are racialised, perpetuating discourses that serve to perpetuate racism and by enshrining racism in law. Attitudes to immigration are often closely linked to institutional racism. Immigration laws continue to be revised and restricted based on colonial relationships, which has formed othering of certain groups and the suppression of their voice. Challenging institutional racism means challenging these discourses. Institutional racism also develops and exists in a historical context. Institutions, including the police, judiciary, and institutions of learning reproduce the structure of oppression and discrimination, with mass protest, movements and dissent the only form of push back against these structures of racism. Racism dehumanises victims of racism. And marginalisation is not singular in its manifestation - people are marginalised in various ways. Reparation, redistribution and restitution are important remedies to address the impacts of racism.

Persistent Resistance

34. Across the Commonwealth, deeply entrenched injustice, born of the systematic undermining of democracy, continues to be met by resistance from civil society organisations and human rights defenders. Monopoly practices and deepening of corporate hegemony, corruption and state capture, governments' increasing insulation from the injustices that policies cause and non-inclusive planning for urbanization are common manifestations of entrenched injustice.

35. Intellectual property rights, including patents and trademarks have become tools to entrench and deepen exclusion and prevent access to affordable health care and other social services. Public benefits are being replaced by private rights, with access determined by affordability, no longer by human need. Increasingly, countries' wealth has become detached from equality in society; economic progress has become the priority, concern for democracy deferred; and despite there being multiple ways to achieve inclusive governance and inclusive institutions, governments are perceived as increasingly working for their interests and the interests of large corporations, rather than for the people.

36. Despite this, local communities, civil society organisations and human rights defenders continue to resist the structures which undermine them, faced with no choice but to engage, resist and protest. Defying adversity, ill treatment, detention and death, resistance is persistent and unyielding. While increasingly and profoundly challenging, there are many pathways to sustaining persistent resistance among civil society organisations and human rights defenders.

37. Protecting these organisations and individuals while making their faces and actions known, building inter-sectional networks, movements and modes of support and ensuring the participation of all groups including the marginalised, is an imperative. The Commonwealth should connect rural and isolated defenders and human rights groups to those that are established and those who are more visible, helping to mobilize community action at local government levels by and for the oppressed, poor and vulnerable; to strengthen their capacity and will to resist, to revise inherited and outdated laws and to challenge international trade agreements that are flawed, hinder development and deny people's rights.

Climate Justice: An Inequitable Burden

38. Many Commonwealth countries are among the most climate vulnerable in the world. They bear the greatest risks and consequences from climate change, but are among the smallest polluters. For these countries, the impacts of climate change impose an inequitable and unjust burden. Adaptation is the predominant focus of discourse on climate change, but it is failing people and their needs, and prevents discussion about 'over development' in the biggest polluting nations. Preoccupation with adaptation is serving instead the interests of the powerful and creates an unfair burden on those in the margins, particularly for peoples of the Pacific. Relocation fails to understand the socio-cultural importance of people's connectivity to their land and the trauma and loss of identity and livelihoods caused by relocation. People also oppose adaptation and relocation because they fear displacement from their lands to unknown and deficient locations.

39. Climate Change conversations also typically centre on natural sciences and geophysical and environmental impacts due to the release of carbon. But this approach neglects consideration of the social and political settlements and arrangements that have contributed to the current state of climate change. Political and historical perspectives must be considered and the voices

of the marginalised amplified in conversations and discourses about climate change. A climate justice approach is also needed, include a conversation about reparative justice, with reparations not limited to financial resources alone.

40. Commonwealth governments must address the inequitable burden placed on the most climate vulnerable countries and people. This includes: (i) Reexamination and review of the narrow framework of 'adaptation' for international funding to climate vulnerable communities; (ii) A conversation about reparative justice that recognizes the political and historical perspectives to the current climate vulnerabilities of countries and people; and (iii) Participation of vulnerable groups in finding solutions to relocation programmes that recognize the socio-cultural importance of land and its importance to identity and livelihoods.

Dissent

41. Dissent is an important part of democracy, allowing the creation of space where multiple truths can be recognized and acknowledged. It engenders a sense of inclusivity and is a necessary means to achieving progressive transformation, by challenging unjust processes everywhere. Dissent can be exercised to improve or to undermine.

42. While forms of dissent are many and varied, the right to dissent is often unequal - majorities may have the right to dissent, while in many cases minorities are faced with the 'management' of dissent rather than expressing their lived realities. Experiences across the Commonwealth, point to this inequality and show that dissent is exercised in many forms and for many purposes, including fighting patriarchy, dismantling racism, challenging religious intolerance, sexual and gender-based discrimination and intersectionality.

Towards a Just World Order and Just Economies

43. The current world order is unjust, based on unequal power structures that have remained fundamentally unchanged since colonialism. Increasingly, governments have yielded economic power to multinational corporations. Consequences include growing economic injustice, more individualistic societies and escalating inequality, driven by policy changes that weaken trade unions and inadequate media portrayal of the scale and impact of global inequality. There has been a huge concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a small elite, leaving the majority of people behind. Neoliberal policies have led to a reversal of progress made in recent decades in human development in many poorer countries, resulting in the current wave of migration to escape the effects of the crisis of development in the South.

44. Across Commonwealth countries, tackling injustice and the inequalities that are the result of the legacy of colonialism and neoliberalism necessitates more inclusive economic governance and reform of international institutions that perpetuate unjust economic power structures. Internal reform is also needed in 'post-colonial' countries. New concepts of democracy are also needed, as elected representatives frequently no longer represent the interests of their people. There is a need for reparations and current power structures need to be changed. This is not just about money alone, but righting historical wrongs and enabling people to engage in relationships in a more equal manner.

45. There is an urgent need to reorient understanding of economic value from economic growth to human well-being, and to develop coherent alternatives to neoliberalism, that invest in a people-first economy and ensure social protection for the most vulnerable, rather than cutting

public services under the ideology of austerity. The rise of global movements and escalating civil society participation create new space and opportunity to develop alternatives.

46. Commonwealth civil society should encourage inter-sectional and inter-generational work and challenge the concentration of power while Commonwealth Heads of Government encourage high-income Commonwealth members to assume greater responsibility for accepting refugees, creating spaces for meaningful and increased citizen participation in decision-making processes and ensuring that economic policies that tackle injustice are based on a gendered and intersectional analysis of their impact and implications.

47. Commonwealth civil society demands a shift towards a people-first economy that: (i) Curbs the influence of international institutions, multinational corporations and elites over governments and the media; (ii) Provides an alternative to GDP- to a growth-centric economic paradigm over-dependent on GDP as a measure of economic health, to include other types of measure that more accurately assess quality of life and inequality and (iii) Necessitates a fundamental change to how economics is taught in universities.

The Digital Age

48. The digital age poses new and unresolved challenges in the quest to create just societies, both helping and hindering their creation. It presents new opportunities and risks to digital advocacy, with trade-offs determined by the underpinning social and regulatory environment. And it demands responses from civil society, to emerging technological issues including net neutrality, big data, robotics and artificial intelligence.

49. Civic engagement and response cannot be passive and apathetic and needs to be more informed and attentive to the implications for people and their rights, of the digital age. Attention to rights and ethical concerns associated with digital technologies is not distinct from similar attention to human and environmental rights and to social justice.

50. Inclusive, participatory governance processes are needed, that include all stakeholders, including minorities, individuals and communities most vulnerable to and at risk of digital technologies, to address challenges and risks and to secure opportunities presented by digital technologies.

51. Cognisant of the accumulating challenges, threats and uncertainties to human rights posed by digital technologies, we call on Commonwealth leaders to: (i) Demand increased, transparent and substantive accountability from digital technology platforms and providers; and (ii) Develop and implement systems and processes to strengthen the protection of the human rights of minorities and other communities most vulnerable to the risks of digital technologies – such as big data, net neutrality, robotics and artificial intelligence.

Separation of Powers

52. Across the Commonwealth, the principle of separation of powers can be enhanced by continuing to promote, utilise and realise the Commonwealth Latimer House Principles and by ensuring the financial and administrative independence of parliament and the judiciary. There is also a particular need to support judicial officers with emphasis on those that serve in the lower courts, who may be more vulnerable to threats to their independence.

53. Ensuring independence of the judiciary requires fair appointment processes for judicial officers, including the need for legislative reforms to ensure the process of judicial appointments is impartial, as well as competitive terms of service and security of tenure. There is also continued need to uphold and protect the freedom of expression particularly for the media.

54. Across the Commonwealth, the separation of the powers of parliament and the judiciary must be enhanced. Civil society calls on Commonwealth Governments to: (i) Promote, utilise and realise the Commonwealth Latimer House Principles to ensure the financial and administrative independence of parliament and the judiciary; (ii) Implement fair and impartial appointment processes for judicial officers and provide support, particularly those in the lower courts, vulnerable to threat from independence; and (iii) Uphold and protect the freedom of expression for the media.

Accountable Governance: Imperatives for a Renewed Commonwealth

55. Accountability is a critical foundation in the renewal of contemporary Commonwealth institutions. Sustainable Development Goal 16 underpins all other SDGs, all of which rest on institutions that are capable of responding to the needs of the public transparently and accountably. It frames accountability as participatory and inclusive. It builds openness and transparency, protects and enables. A renewed Commonwealth can only emerge and flourish on foundations of accountable governance. Opportunities and challenges in building these foundations were explored, through practical initiatives taken in and by municipal governments, the private sector, municipal and local governments; through initiatives to hold countries to account for universal health coverage, accountability in development and the media.

A Tale of Three Cities

56. Municipal government is often more closely connected to citizens and often has a greater impact on their lives than national government. Municipal government is more accessible to the people and citizens are able to more easily engage with local representatives. As representatives of the people, it is important to account for stewardship and be transparent in doing so. Government spending including details of procurement and the audit of government accounts should be published. Information on government's activities should be regularly provided and made available to everyone whether or not they share government's agenda. Government should be able to illustrate to citizens how they govern. Holding regular town hall meetings is a common way of doing this.

57. Securing citizens' buy-in on government's programme is important because public resources are being deployed on behalf of the people who should be involved in policy formulation and engaged with through different platforms. Each city has its own character. City dwellers may often have a stronger sense of identity to their city than to their nation. It is important for government to understand what the identity of the city means to the people living in it. People coalesce around the city's identity and government should find moments when this happens to engage. Data is important to government as it helps to understand how the people live and governance is more appropriately designed using this data. Government should use data responsibly to make governance more effective.

The Private Sector in Governance

58. The private sector can play multiple roles in development, including advancing innovation, creating wealth, income and jobs, mobilising domestic resources and in turn contributing to poverty reduction, but the private sector can also embrace a disproportionate focus on Public Private Partnership (PPP) models of development, which have often neglected development of social infrastructure in favour of financing economic infrastructure through imposition of user fees.

59. Strengthening private sector accountability and building an effective governance framework for the private sector requires restoring peoples' ability to hold and keep the private sector accountable, including by strengthening the right to information; and by strengthening regulatory frameworks to ensure PPP approaches promote democratic ownership, effectiveness and accountability, deepening the impact of private sector investment in reducing poverty. Transparency in the use of public funds by private providers is critical, and should not be undermined by the application of commercial-in-confidence contractual provisions. Regulatory frameworks should also establish enforceable human rights and environmental guidelines for corporations and ensure compliance. Governments must create an enabling environment for the private sector.

Decentralising Power

60. There is increasing recognition of the importance of decentralisation and devolution of power from national to local government to address local development challenges, increase the effectiveness of service delivery, and promote people's participation. However, decentralisation has been very uneven across the Commonwealth. While some countries have moved further towards decentralising power and funding, in others local governance institutions are strongly influenced by party political considerations and patronage networks, which can determine funding decisions.

61. Effective local governance relies on citizen participation, which requires people's capacity and will to engage and hold local governance actors to account on the one hand, and for local governments to create structures and systems for genuine engagement on the other. These require an awareness of gender, how it intersects with other identity markers such as class or race, as those coming forward to participate may be more likely to come from privileged backgrounds, rather than representing a true reflection of the population in a particular area. Reliable access to predictable funding is also crucial, as excluding citizens and local government actors from national government budgetary decisions and this prevents them from long term planning and accountability towards citizens.

62. Local governments are also crucial to resolving global challenges and helping shape the future. In the Commonwealth, these cannot be addressed by national governments on their own. Local governance should be harnessed as a means to drive and sustain representation and support minorities, including women into leadership positions. Local government needs to be innovative to ensure the voices of communities, women and youth are included in strategy development. Citizens and civil society need to be supported to develop capacities to engage local governance. Legal frameworks and sanctions need to be put in place to strengthen accountability, especially for cities.

63. Civil society calls for: (i) Responsive local governance that provides reliable access to predictable funding so that citizens and local governments that have been excluded from

national government budgetary decisions can benefit from long term planning and accountability; (ii) Support to develop civic capacities to engage in local governance underpinned by legal frameworks and sanctions that strengthen accountability, particularly for cities; (iii) Use of opportunities presented by local governance to drive, support and sustain women's representation in leadership positions; (iv) New structures within local governance to ensure the concerns of young people, women and other marginalised groups can be heard and responded to; and (v) Improved collaboration between international donors and local governments in local development planning.

Accountability in Development

64. Complexity within the development and aid sector makes transparency and accountability to beneficiaries ever more important. Key accountability dimensions for all actors - civil society, donors, INGOs, governments and corporations - include answerability - the obligation to inform, explain and justify decisions and actions; enforcement - the capacity of accounting agencies to impose sanctions on public sector officials who violate their duties; and clear definition of roles and responsibility of all actors. These dimensions have been overlooked for many years and must be put centre stage.

65. Poor accountability has been fueled by inconsistency in policies and practices; weak structures and systems of local government to support accountability demands and is further compounded by an unskilled media to probe and investigate issues. Costs associated with mutual accountability means international partners have relied on voluntary systems rather than compliance.

66. Complexity within the development and aid sector makes transparency and accountability to beneficiaries ever more important. We call on all Commonwealth countries to strengthen accountability and transparency in development regimes to include: (i) Explicit, direct and unambiguous agreements on principles, commitments and standards of development cooperation; (ii) Proactive and consistent information sharing with the public through multiple channels; and (iii) Enable people's ownership of development, including strengthening local capacity to demand accountability and to be accountable themselves in their various partnerships.

Media Accountability

67. Commonwealth civil society members are especially concerned about the need for greater accountability in the media and of its co-option by corporate and elite interests. An unaccountable media has the potential to manipulate public perceptions by blurring news and opinion. Calling for greater accountability does not mean curbing press freedom; it means greater representation of the interests, topics and people it portrays, surpassing the restraints of agenda setting power.

68. The Commonwealth should ensure that its media does not 'manufacture consent' and that it is reflective of people's interests - not a proxy voice for corporate and political power. Accountability in the media is critical for inclusive governance in Commonwealth societies. Civil society calls on the Commonwealth collectively to ensure that its media reflects people's agendas and not corporate and political agendas.



Renewing the Commonwealth

69. We stand at the threshold of a new Commonwealth future, built on equality, diversity, a constant questioning, and interrogation of the constraints and challenges that face us, and the opportunities, strengths and values that unite us as human beings with shared stories.

70. We will achieve this through common effort, shared experience, action with vision and imagination, and by building inclusive, participative, responsive systems of governance that leave no-one behind.

71) Therefore civil society organisations gathered at CPF 2018 issued A Call to Action on Inclusive Governance for a Renewed Commonwealth.

Commonwealth Peoples' Forum London

April 2018



Inclusive Governance for a Renewed Commonwealth A Call to Action

24 May 2018

As Commonwealth civil society, we have met at the Commonwealth Peoples' Forum 2018 (CPF 2018), held from 16-18 April 2018. Reflecting on our work and experiences in Commonwealth countries and drawing on our deliberations at CPF 2018, including policy dialogues, plenary and panel sessions attended by over 350 delegates from across the Commonwealth, we issue our **Call to Action – Inclusive Governance for a Renewed Commonwealth**. Commonwealth renewal is no longer an option, but an achievable imperative.

Inclusion is crucial to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. But exclusion has become accepted across the Commonwealth, through injustice, discrimination and the exclusion of the rights of marginalised, and vulnerable communities and societies.

Civic voices call on the Commonwealth to work collectively to: end exclusion, tackle injustice and inequality, including gender inequality, and commit to transparency and accountability.

Ending Exclusion in the Commonwealth

1. Legislative Reform in the Commonwealth

Civil society calls on all Commonwealth Governments to accelerate legislative reform that:

- Respects human rights and facilitates access to mental health care;
- Decriminalises consensual same sex relations between adults and eliminates other discriminatory provisions; and
- Ends impunity on all forms of gender based violence.

2. Accessing Justice

Across the Commonwealth we must establish policies in justice systems, that:

- Break down legal, financial and institutional barriers that prevent, intentionally or unintentionally, access to justice;
- Afford reasonable accommodation and access to courts and other public places to persons with disabilities; and
- Provide targeted fellowship and legal aid programmes to persons with disabilities, disadvantaged people and those at risk.

3. Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Civil society calls for reinvigorated attention to the concerns of Indigenous Peoples throughout the Commonwealth. We call for a new Commonwealth agenda that includes:

- Constitutional reform to recognise their land and territories and to correct historical injustice and exclusion;
- Recognition of Indigenous Peoples as citizens of their own Nations, free to design and develop new approaches to self-determination;
- Enforcement of the right to free, prior and informed consent; and
- Implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

- Initiatives to close the gaps in quality of life measures between Indigenous Peoples and other citizens, including life expectancy, health outcomes, educational achievement, employment levels and incarceration rates.

4. Women Negotiating Peace

Civil society calls on all Commonwealth governments to:

- Recognise and strengthen women's roles in negotiating peace, at both national and local levels, including the appointment of more women as main actors and in positions of authority in peace negotiations, to ensure that peace negotiations are inclusive and sustainable.

5. Migration

We must reimagine migration. Across the Commonwealth, civil society calls for:

- An end to the practices of indefinite detention of asylum seekers anywhere in the Commonwealth. There must be a maximum limit on detention and no adults at risk and children detained; and
- Better-resourced local and municipal governments, providing migrants with expanded service provision programmes including integration in local communities.

6. People Centred Health and Education

Inclusive and people-centred education and health systems are critical foundations for just, resilient and sustainable Commonwealth societies. We call on Commonwealth governments to:

- Expand access and equity, improve quality and reduce the costs of education; and
- Make health services accessible to everyone by curbing the privatisation of education and health care provision and ensuring health care systems put public care at the forefront.

Tackling injustice in the Commonwealth

7. Climate Justice

Commonwealth governments must address the inequitable burden placed on the most climate vulnerable countries and people by global climate change. This includes:

- Reexamining and reviewing the narrow framework of 'adaptation' for international funding to climate vulnerable communities;
- Committing to a programme of reparatory justice that recognizes the importance of political and historical processes in shaping current climate vulnerabilities; and
- Enabling the participation of vulnerable groups in finding solutions to relocation programmes that recognize the socio-cultural importance of land and its importance to identity and livelihoods.

8. Just World Order and Just Economies

Commonwealth civil society demands a shift towards a people-first economy that:

- Curbs the influence of international institutions, multinational corporations and elites over governments and the media;
- Provides an alternative to a growth-centric economic paradigm over-dependent on GDP as a measure of economic health, to include other measures that more accurately assess quality of life and inequality; and
- Necessitates a fundamental change to how economics is taught in universities, to include much greater questioning of the current dominant capital-centric and labour-exploitative economic models.

9. Digital Age

The digital age poses new and unresolved challenges in the quest to create just societies, both helping and hindering their creation. Civil society calls on all Commonwealth leaders to:

- Demand increased, transparent and substantive accountability from digital technology platforms and providers; and
- Develop and implement systems and processes to strengthen the protection of the human rights of minorities and other communities most vulnerable to the risks of digital technologies – such as big data, net neutrality, robotics and artificial intelligence.

Finally, we call for a total commitment to accountability in the Commonwealth through...

10. Separation of Powers

Across the Commonwealth, the separation of the powers of parliament and the judiciary must be enhanced. Civil society calls on Commonwealth Governments to:

- Promote, utilise and realise the Commonwealth Latimer House Principles to ensure the financial and administrative independence of parliament and the judiciary;
- Implement fair and impartial appointment processes for judicial officers and provide support, particularly those in lower courts, where independence may be threatened; and
- Uphold and protect freedom of expression for the media and enhance ways in which people can keep governments accountable, including upholding the right to information.

11. Accountability in Development

Complexity within the development and aid sector makes transparency and accountability to beneficiaries ever more important. Civil society calls on all Commonwealth countries to strengthen accountability in development regimes to include:

- Explicit, direct, transparent and unambiguous agreements on principles, commitments and standards of development cooperation;
- Proactive and consistent information sharing with the public, including with the people's representatives; and
- Enable people's ownership of and participation in development initiatives, including strengthening local capacity and accountability of partnerships to the people impacted by such development.

12. Decentralising Power

Civil society calls for:

- Responsive local governance that provides reliable access to predictable funding so that citizens that have been excluded from national government budgetary decisions benefit from long term planning and accountability;
- Support to develop civic capacities to engage in local governance underpinned by legal frameworks and sanctions that strengthen accountability and transparency, particularly for cities;
- Use of opportunities presented by local governance to drive, support and sustain women's representation in leadership positions;
- New structures within local governance to ensure the concerns of young people, women and other marginalised groups can be heard and responded to within a human rights framework that upholds equality and non-discrimination; and
- Improved collaboration between international donors and local governments in local development planning.

13. Media Accountability

Calling for greater media accountability does not mean curbing press freedom. It means greater representation of the interests, issues and people it covers surpassing the restraints of the agenda set by corporate elites. Accountability in the media is critical for inclusive governance in Commonwealth societies. Civil society calls on the Commonwealth collectively to:

- Ensure that its media fairly and completely reflects the people's agenda, rather than focusing on a corporate and political agenda.

Renewing the Commonwealth

We stand at the threshold of a new Commonwealth future, built on equality, diversity, a constant questioning, and interrogation of the constraints and challenges that face us and the opportunities, strengths and values that unite us as human beings with shared stories.

We will achieve this through common effort, shared experience, action with vision and imagination, and by building inclusive, participatory, responsive and accountable systems of governance that leave no-one behind.

Commonwealth Peoples' Forum London

April 2018