

12th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (12WAMM)

**From Commitment to Action: Accelerating Gender Equality and
Women's Empowerment for Sustainable Development**

Nairobi, Kenya, 19 - 20 September 2019

DRAFT DECLARATION ON GENDER EQUALITY 2020-2030

Draft Commonwealth Declaration for Gender equality and the Empowerment of Women 2020-2030

1. At their June 2020 meeting in Rwanda, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) affirmed and strengthened their commitment to accelerate gender equality by continuing to take achievable, comprehensive and meaningful actions within their own countries and to strengthen their contribution to global efforts, through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
2. Heads acknowledged that gender equality and inclusion is necessary to achieve outcomes in all other areas of social, political and economic life. While considerable efforts have been taken, progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls has been slow. Heads remain concerned that in situations of poverty women and girls have the least access to food, health, education, land ownership, access to capital, training and opportunities for employment and other needs that would raise the standard of living for women, girls, their communities and societies. They reiterated that all forms of discrimination and violence against all women and girls violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity and hampers the growth in the prosperity of societies, communities and families. To ensure the full development of the potential of women in the service of their countries and of humanity, Heads called on all Commonwealth countries to ratify and strengthen support to implement the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Heads resolved to address systemic barriers to women's full and equal participation in the economy by taking a gender-responsive approach to the development of trade and other related policies. In order to successfully break down the barriers facing women to trade, countries need to prioritise gender within their trade and economic agendas, including by supporting data-gathering initiatives relating to trade and gender and sharing best practices, such as through the SheTrades Outlook, and by addressing the gender digital divide.
3. Convinced that the establishment of the new international economic order based on equity and justice should contribute significantly towards the promotion of gender equality, Heads committed to increasing women's access to decision-making and leadership by committing to work with all political parties to increase the proportion of women candidates standing for public office. This can be achieved by providing training and mentoring opportunities for potential women candidates, removing discriminatory practices in campaigns and elections, and developing action plans to ensure women candidates and voters are free from violence. Heads committed to investigate the benefits of voluntary or legislative quotas or targets for women in the political, public and private sectors. Economic empowerment principles based on equity and justice will contribute significantly towards gender equality. As such Heads committed to increasing women's access to decision-making, leadership, and education, eliminating violence against

women and girls, ensuring equal pay, and valuing and recognising women's unpaid care work.

4. Heads affirmed their unwavering commitment to strongly encourage access to a minimum 12 years of free quality education for girls and celebrated progress made thus far. They committed to urgent action to ensure marginalised and vulnerable girls access this right. Heads commended the member states which now provide bursaries to girls pursuing higher learning at tertiary levels. Heads committed to build and upgrade education facilities that are child-, disability-, and gender-sensitive and provide safe, non-violent inclusive, accessible and effective learning environments for all. Heads agreed to move away from measuring gender parity, and towards wider gender equality in education, understanding and addressing the barriers that stop women and girls from accessing education throughout their lifetime. Heads agreed to end discriminatory policies and practices such as exclusion of pregnant or married girls from school.
5. Heads committed to ensure universal health coverage for all women and girls in the Commonwealth to have access to comprehensive, quality sexual and reproductive health services, particularly for modern family planning. Heads committed to build on the call of the 2018 Commonwealth Women's Forum (CWF), to implement and uphold comprehensive quality Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for all women and young people and ensure universal health coverage, ensuring that by 2030 women and young people have universal access to sexual and reproductive health care services, including for family planning, information and education, with relevant data collection, review and follow-up, as well as access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education.
6. Heads committed to ensure that all Commonwealth countries provide legal protections from violence and harassment and access to services for all women and girls in the workplace, public spaces, in their homes, and in the digital sphere, and that appropriate resources are provided to enforce such laws. Recognizing that women and girls are disproportionately affected by forced labour, human trafficking, modern slavery, including sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and child exploitation, Heads agreed that all Commonwealth countries adopt comprehensive and effective legislation against these issues that adhere to relevant international instruments. Heads agreed that all Commonwealth countries should have comprehensive national strategies to eliminate child, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation and violence against women and girls; and to reduce the impact of conflict on women and girls and promote and support their full and meaningful participation in all conflict prevention and resolution efforts, mechanisms, and institutions. Heads agreed that national strategies should be adequately, both financially and technically, resourced to include actions to challenge and change social attitudes that underpin gender based violence and abuse, including highlighting the role of men and boys as agents of change.

7. Heads acknowledged the gendered impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, and committed to drive forward inclusive and gender-transformative solutions within national action plans across mitigation, adaptation and resilience across the Commonwealth.
8. To ensure action is sustained, collaboration across nations enhanced and best practice shared, Heads committed to mobilising technical and financial resources for gender equality at all levels and reporting on progress towards gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls at CHOGM 2022.
9. Heads requested the Chair in Office of CHOGM with the support of the Commonwealth Secretariat to bring this Declaration to the attention of member countries, relevant international organisations, including the United Nations system, regional entities and other stakeholders as the Commonwealth's commitments to Beijing +25 in 2020 to 2030.
10. Heads invited members of civil society, non-government organisations, private sector, academia and development partners to support member countries in accelerating the realisation of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the Commonwealth and beyond.