

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE 10TH COMMONWEALTH WOMEN'S AFFAIRS MINISTERIAL MEETING FROM THE PARTNERS' FORUM

PREAMBLE

We, the delegates attending the 10th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministerial Meeting Partners' Forum (10WPF), representing 17 Commonwealth countries and comprising of stakeholders from civil society, business, academia, media, governments, parliaments and donor communities acknowledge the improvements made by some countries in addressing the rights of women and girls in areas such as health and education, in part due to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We note that the MDGs did not directly address the economic empowerment of women, without which sustainable development cannot be achieved.

With less than 1000 days remaining we call on Commonwealth Governments to urgently accelerate efforts to achieve MDG 3 and 5. A framework that can be adopted by the Commonwealth is the UN Women and UN Global Compact Women's Empowerment Principles: *Equality means Business*.

We can make poverty history if we address and overcome challenges to women's and girls' economic empowerment and rights.

WE CALL ON GOVERNMENTS TO PRIORITISE WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

We call on Commonwealth governments to advocate for a specific, stand alone goal for women's equality and economic empowerment and for measurable targets and indicators that formally ensure that women's and girls' economic empowerment is included in the post-2015 development agenda.

We call on Ministers for Women's Affairs to advocate for broader international recognition that all existing and future development goals should be inextricably linked and driven by women's and girls' equality and empowerment.

We call on Ministers to ensure that the voices of grassroots and civil society across the Commonwealth are reflected in the post 2015 development agenda.

We call on Ministers to address the multi-faceted and complex barriers that hinder women from achieving their economic potential. Social, cultural, economic and legal barriers and obstacles must be addressed in order for women to achieve equality and justice. This includes the lack of women's voice and leadership in decision making; inadequate access to land and property; lack of control and ownership of assets and income; lack of access to opportunity, information, technology and finance; early marriage and violence against women and girls.

We acknowledge that to achieve women's and girls' economic empowerment, a multi-dimensional, holistic approach will be required at national, regional and international level.

WE CALL ON GOVERNMENTS TO URGENTLY ADDRESS SPECIFIC BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN THEIR COUNTRIES THROUGH:

- **STRENGTHENING POLICIES TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH**

We affirm the CSW57's call for Governments to undertake legislative, administrative, financial and other measures to give women full and equal access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources and appropriate technologies, inter alia, by means of international cooperation; prioritize and intensify initiatives towards the economic empowerment of women at the grass-roots level, including through entrepreneurship education and business incubators, as a way of uplifting their status. (Paragraph hh)

We call on Ministers to put in place and implement the necessary specific policies that enable women to get better access to finance, markets and information, address land and property rights that discriminate against women, develop skills, competencies and attitudes in entrepreneurship, build a culture of knowledge sharing and learning and the use of technology as an enabler of change. We acknowledge that this will require enhanced statistical capacity in Commonwealth countries.

We call for a comprehensive entrepreneurship policy framework that explicitly includes the promotion of women's entrepreneurship in both the formal and informal sectors including marginalized people in rural and urban areas.

We call for stronger public private partnerships, greater accountability and a participatory framework for policy making that includes the voices of women entrepreneurs.

We call for active participation of women in economic decision-making, as well as women's full and equal participation in public and political life that results in equitable outcomes for all.

This is essential for addressing the structural and underlying causes of violence against women and girls.

- **PREVENTING AND ELIMINATING ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**

We endorse the agreed conclusions of the CSW57 on the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls.

We call on governments to adopt, as appropriate, review, and ensure the accelerated and effective implementation of laws and comprehensive measures that criminalise violence against women and girls, and that provide for multidisciplinary and gender-sensitive preventive and protective measures such as emergency barring orders and protection orders, the investigation, submission for prosecution and appropriate punishment of perpetrators to end impunity, support services that

empower victims and survivors, as well as access to appropriate civil remedies and redress.
(Paragraph c)

We call on all Governments to have a much overdue zero tolerance to violence against women and girls in all Commonwealth countries.

- **RECOGNISING AND ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITY**

We affirm the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2006).

We call on Governments to create an environment of respect and dignity for women and girls with disabilities by ratifying and implementing the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

We call on Ministers to promote the full participation of women and girls with disabilities in the formal and informal economy; in particular their participation in economic decision making, equal access to full employment and decent work.

We call on Governments to put in place the necessary specific policies that promote and enable women and girls with disabilities to get better access to finance, skills, competencies, information, technology and other resources for entrepreneurial development.

We thank the Government and the people of Bangladesh and BRAC for their warm welcome and generous hospitality. We also thank the Commonwealth Foundation for offering this platform for civil society to come together and contribute to effective governance.

17 June 2013
Savar, Bangladesh