

Commonwealth Youth Forum 7

Invest in Youth Sustain the World

Communique Statement

Held at:

Lowlands, Tobago and Port of Spain, Trinidad

21st to 28th November 2009

Summary – Climate Change

The youth of the Commonwealth require governments to recognise, develop and implement adaptive strategies that aim to address both current and future effects of climate change. Immediate action must be taken to preserve our collective futures in the face of this global crisis. All governments should enhance awareness through public education campaigns. Governments should research and develop environmentally and socially responsible alternative energy resources and re-usable energy products through collaboration with viable partners.

Summary – Youth Involvement in Decision Making

Despite the current global economic challenges, it is absolutely essential to lay the foundation for youth involvement in decision making. All youth are to be empowered and equipped with the equal opportunity to be part of the entire decision making process at all levels of governance. This can be achieved by enhancing accessibility through the increase of resources, improvement of infrastructure and promotion of tolerance. Further, we advocate for the effective dissemination of information through the establishment of information and research centres locally, including a website.

Summary - Economic Growth, Building Sustainable Livelihoods

There are over a billion young people in the Commonwealth today. As consumers, entrepreneurs and taxpayers, we as young people are catalysts for economic growth. To maximise our economic potential we need improved access to financial information and tools, and to raise the level of financial education and support among young people.

The Commonwealth Secretariat should establish a Commonwealth Youth Economic Society (CYES) to encourage youth to engage in discussion about economic issues and policies. Immediately we recommend that respective governments improve youth access to credit, advice, mentorship, technical training and service exchange partnerships. As the demand from the youth increases, a Youth Development Bank should be established.

Summary - Peace Building

We, the young people, believe that increased self awareness and self respect can change the way we treat ourselves and those around us. In order to achieve peace, greater respect and understanding stemming from change in oneself and one's outlook is necessary. We commit to taking responsibility to develop and implement strategies that promote and exemplify respect and understanding, a culture of peace and the eradication of violence.

All governments should address the underlying causes of conflict and also involve young people in all stages and processes of peace building.

Now is the time to invest in youth. Youth are not a problem to solve, but an asset to develop.

Climate Change

The youth of the Commonwealth commit to living more sustainably and requires government to recognise, develop and implement adaptive strategies that aim to address both current and long term effects of climate change. All governments should be concerned with energy security and sustainable development.

Recommendations:

- Commonwealth Nations should collaborate with universities and research institutions to conduct research and promote environmentally and socially responsible development into alternative energy sources and products and provide incentives for their use.
- We strongly encourage collaboration among Commonwealth countries to share best practices and resources to achieve development goals in dealing with climate change.
- That young people be represented in decision making roles at environmental meetings and climate change negotiations.

- Incorporate the subject of climate change into the curriculum in schools and other training institutions in the Commonwealth so that young people can be empowered to mitigate climate change and its effects.
- Implement a measureable, integrated and accessible global education campaign at all levels geared towards building awareness and resilient communities with respect to climate change.
- Commonwealth Secretariat to create and strengthen partnerships with various international partners in climate change.
- Nations should conduct analyses as to their degree of vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and incorporate adaptive and mitigating strategies when formulating their development plan.

Peace Building

We, the young people, believe that increased self awareness and self respect can change the way we treat ourselves and those around us. In order to achieve peace, greater respect and understanding stemming from change in oneself and one's outlook is necessary. We commit to taking responsibility to develop and implement strategies that promote and exemplify respect and understanding, a culture of peace and the eradication of violence.

We therefore recommend the following:

Young people

- We propose the creation of a youth media consultative body, with representatives from commonwealth regions, to share and promote research, best practices and policy in peace-building. This process is to encourage media to educate and influence youth perspectives in promoting a culture of peace and eradicating violence.

Government

- Governments should address the underlying causes of conflict such as grievances over culture, social inequality, language, religion and land.
- Governments should implement programmes to enable young people to develop and sustain peace, through re-constructing positive value systems and undertaking community service.
- In order to enable peaceful communities, Governments should distribute resources equitably and transparently among youth in a manner that ensures accountability.

CYP and CYEC

- Assist in mobilising resources necessary to support the Youth Media Consultative body.
- Should institute a Young Ambassadors for Peace Building programme to promote peace building among young people within the Commonwealth.

Economic Growth, Building Sustainable Livelihoods

There are over a billion young people in the Commonwealth today. As consumers, entrepreneurs and taxpayers, we as young people are catalysts for economic growth. To maximise our economic potential we need improved access to financial information and tools, and to raise the level of financial education among young people.

We therefore recommend the following:

- Financial education and entrepreneurship programmes should be institutionalised within formal and vocational education and continually supported and funded as these are catalysts for economic growth.
- Governments should create a more enabling process for youth to set up businesses and, where necessary, legislate to support youth entrepreneurship.
- Governments should work in partnership with National Youth Organisations, civil society and financial institutions to support young people to create web database(s) to raise awareness about existing financial opportunities for entrepreneurship (noting recommendation 4 of Youth Involvement in Decision Making).
- Establish a Commonwealth Youth Economic Society (CYES) to encourage youth to engage in discussion about economic issues and policies, including the development of alternative methodologies for economic analysis.
- Immediately we recommend that respective governments improve youth access to credit, advice, mentorship, technical training and service exchange partnerships. As the demand from the youth increases, a Youth Development Bank should be established.
- Governments should ensure the sustainability of social services delivery, particularly to youths at all levels, in times of economic crisis.
- Governments and the private sector should cooperate to strengthen research and investment in new areas such as green industries and other innovative sectors to create employment opportunities for youth.

Youth Involvement in Decision Making

Young people are the largest human resource pool in the Commonwealth and deserve sound economic and social investments. These investments will act as a catalyst for young people to be more responsible and contributing citizens. The recommendations put forward below would need to be implemented in a sustainable manner to ensure continuity and progression.

The recommendations are detailed below;

1. Governments should facilitate young people's participation in society irrespective of economic, religious, ethnic, political, educational or social status especially differently-abled youth by enhancing accessibility through increasing resources, improving infrastructure and promoting tolerance.
2. Youth must be represented in decision making roles at all levels of governance (for example government boards, commonwealth bodies, school boards, and parliament) via a transparent, accountable and accessible process, and supported to develop structures where they do not exist.
3. Establish information and research centres locally, including a website, as a hub for all youth programmes and activities as a means of encouraging youth participation in decision making processes.
4. We believe that for any portal to be successful extensive consultation with all stakeholders is necessary. We acknowledge the initiative of the CP3 programme and request that further planning, development and implementation be conditional upon robust consultation with the youth of all Commonwealth regions and/or countries.
5. It is imperative that all Commonwealth member countries establish a national youth representative body, for example national youth parliaments or national youth councils, by the 8th Commonwealth Youth Forum.
6. We believe that meaningful dialogue between young people and Heads of Government at CHOGM should be a mandatory feature of all future Commonwealth Youth Forums.
7. In order to realise the implementation of national action plans and recommendations in the Commonwealth Youth Forum Communiqué, post-CHOGM dialogue between country delegates and their respective governments is necessary.

Action plan:

Climate Change

- Commonwealth Heads of Government draft and ratify treaties with respect to environmentally and socially responsible alternative energy sources (hereafter ‘alternative energy sources’).
- Governments should encourage and promote the use of alternative energy sources by providing incentives such as:
 - Tax breaks or grants for using, obtaining and processing alternative energy sources,
 - Introducing and enforcing legislation that progressively raises environmental standards,
 - The development of a joint fund that provides support for environmentally friendly infrastructure development in all Commonwealth countries.
- We strongly recommend research and development of infrastructure that allows the utilisation of re-usable products versus single use products.
- Countries should implement proven strategies, for example legislate sorting of waste at source and organise reduce, reuse and recycle programmes.
- Governments to implement a measurable education campaign for climate change that utilises all forms of media and involves activities by community based organisations.
- The demarcation of at least 25% of geographic area for green spaces within all Commonwealth nations in order to regulate the micro climate of those nations.

Action Plan for Youth in Peace Building

- Youth representatives of different Commonwealth regions must sit on the Youth Media Consultative Committee to engage media on issues of respect, understanding, the promotion of peace and the eradication of violence.
- The Youth Media Consultative Committee be facilitated by the Commonwealth Youth Programme and other partners such as the Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council and the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association.

As a result of our shared individual commitment to peace building, the Young Ambassadors for Peace Building programme (inclusive of the youth as defined by the Commonwealth) would work towards establishing the following:

- A foundation which would render help to children, youth and their families who have been disadvantaged or exposed to violence,
- Campaigns and legislation that focus on encouraging equality and the fair treatment of all citizens of the Commonwealth,

- Ensuring that differently-abled youth be adequately represented and have access to infrastructure,
- Programmes which will focus on making values education available to youth such as those that utilise the arts.

Economic Growth, Building Sustainable Livelihoods

- Governments should introduce internet access and where possible increase the broadband penetration rate in an effort to enhance youth access to opportunities and information.
- Governments and other stakeholders should create and / or maintain Youth Heritage Funds to safeguard future generations.
- Governments should encourage banking institutions to formalise youth friendly lending policies with preference given to new and existing entrepreneurs.
- The Commonwealth Youth Programme and partners should encourage and publicise youth participation in the Commonwealth Youth Economic Society.

Youth in Decision Making

- National Youth Councils and / or other youth bodies should utilise the resources from the Commonwealth Youth Programme to ensure consistency, accountability and transparency at all levels of governance. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation must be done by youth on all decision making processes and programmes concerning youth.
- The Commonwealth Youth Programme should, in partnership with all stakeholders, monitor and evaluate the level of youth involvement in Commonwealth bodies and national bodies.
- Youth representatives of Commonwealth countries must disseminate and promote information gathered at the 7th Commonwealth Youth Forum (including the recommendations) through all available networks (such as social media, youth organisations and schools) enabling all young people to become activists and advocates.
- Official country delegates from the 7th Commonwealth Youth Forum should encourage regular dialogue between the youth and the relevant Ministries to foster understanding of the communiqué and track the implementation of the recommendations.
- Within 2 years, youth engagement programmes need to be extended to at least 25% of rural and marginalised areas in each Commonwealth country so as to enable youth to play active roles in decision making. For countries that have already achieved this, further effort is required to achieve the next proposed goal of 50%.

- All services and organisations designed to incorporate youth involvement should be made accessible to differently-abled youth.
- Governments should extensively sponsor educational campaigns about national and other youth policies to further empower and encourage youth involvement in decision making.