

# **CLGF REPORT ON THE 2013 COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING (CHOGM) - COLOMBO, SRI LANKA**

## **Meetings held**

Commonwealth Heads of Government met in Colombo, Sri Lanka, 15-17 November; of the 50 countries present, 27 were represented by their Heads of Government/State; the meeting was chaired by President Rajapaksa of Sri Lanka and it was addressed by HRH Prince Charles on behalf of the Head of the Commonwealth. A pre-CHOGM meeting of Foreign Ministers was held 13-14 November and a Ministerial Meeting on Small States was held on 12 November. There were also meetings of the Commonwealth Business Forum, the Commonwealth People's Forum and the Commonwealth Youth Forum. The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) also met.

CLGF was officially accredited to CHOGM and its delegation was composed of Mayor Lawrence Yule (Chairperson), Mayor Mohamed Hilmy (Board member, Asia) and Carl Wright (Secretary-General). Delegation members observed the Foreign Ministers' Meeting and the Ministerial Meeting on Small States, participated in a consultation between Foreign Ministers and Commonwealth Associated Organisations (AOs) on 16 November, which was addressed by Mayor Yule, attended the CHOGM Opening Ceremony on 15 November, various social functions and took part in the Business Forum and the People's Forum.

Informal meetings were also held with a wide range of Heads of Government, ministers and officials, including from Australia, Bangladesh, Belize, Canada, Jamaica, Malawi, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tonga, Trinidad & Tobago, Uganda, the UK and Zambia. CLGF also hosted a reception for Sri Lankan local government and took part in a Steering Committee meeting on the CLGF Sri Lanka project, as well as meeting with UNDP Sri Lanka.

## **CLGF Objectives met**

CLGF objectives for CHOGM had been set by the CLGF Executive Committee, which had met in London, 6-7 November and had as their core objective securing endorsement of the CLGF Kampala Conference outcomes. Thanks to the active support of several delegations, notably Trinidad & Tobago and Uganda, these were fully met, indeed exceeded.

The 2013 CHOGM formally recognised the role which developmental local government can play in enhancing the exercise of democratic governance and in the defining and delivery of essential services as well as in promoting economic development. Commonwealth leaders also endorsed local government's role in the post-2015 Development Agenda as set out in the outcomes of the recent Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) Kampala conference. In addition, they endorsed the declaration of 2014 as the *Year of Developmental Local Government* and expressed particular appreciation for the reports and contributions of the CLGF.

Specifically:

*“They recognised the role which local government in particular can play in enhancing the exercise of democratic governance and in the defining and delivery of essential services as well as in promoting economic development. Heads endorsed the 2013 ‘Kampala Declaration on Developmental Local Government’ together with the accompanying Munyonyo Statement on Local Government’s Role in the post-2015 Development Agenda as well as the declaration of 2014 as the year of Developmental Local Government.”* (Communique

pa. 34)

*“Heads warmly welcomed the many and diverse inputs and support for the Commonwealth association at large and its shared values, principles and goals made by accredited Commonwealth organisations. They expressed their particular appreciation for the reports and contributions of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Commonwealth Business Council, and Commonwealth Local Government Forum.”* (Communique pa. 95).

At the consultation with Associated Organisations on 16 November, a significant number of ministers moreover called for a strengthening of the institutional relationship, notably between the Commonwealth Secretariat and AOs, as had been proposed by CLGF.

### **2013 CHOGM: Other key outcomes and initiatives**

Although much international media attention was focussed on human rights issues in relation to Sri Lanka and the decision of the Prime Ministers of Canada, India and Mauritius not to attend the CHOGM, the event dealt with a wide range of development and democracy issues (including some considerable controversy about the position of the Commonwealth towards Zimbabwe). It also coincided with the second round of elections in the Maldives, which had been the subject of some concern.

Apart from the areas of direct interest to CLGF, indicated above, the following are some of highlights and new initiatives which came out of the CHOGM (relevant Communique paragraphs indicated):

- Establishment of open ended High Level Working Group of Heads of Government to help shape the post 2015 Development Agenda and prepare a Commonwealth Statement (pa 16).
- Commonwealth Climate Finance Skills Hub to be hosted by Mauritius (pa 20).
- Commonwealth engagement with G20 (para 30-31).
- Mining ‘to benefit local communities’ (pa. 47).
- New CMAG membership: Cyprus, Guyana, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Tanzania (pa 52).
- Small States: establishment of open-ended ministerial working group (pa. 53), Small States Centre of Excellence to support capacity building and interventions in the areas of both democracy and development, to be hosted by Malta (pa. 54) and focus on 2014 SIDS Conference, Samoa (pa. 56).
- Taking forward the Commonwealth Cybercrime Initiative (pa. 64).
- Supporting the 2014 elections in Fiji (pa. 77).
- ‘Engagement’ with The Gambia (pa. 84).
- Creation of working group of officials on movement of Commonwealth citizens (pa 86).
- Malta to host 2015 CHOGM, Vanuatu in 2017 and Malaysia in 2019 (pa.98).

Heads of Government also adopted:

*Colombo Declaration on Sustainable, Inclusive and Equitable Development:* This dealt with the CHOGM theme and set out some broad principles, also with regard to the Commonwealth engagement on the post 2015 development agenda.

*Kotte Statement on International Trade and Investment:* A key suggestion was for an assessment of the need for and viability of a Commonwealth trade and investment finance facility and a pilot mechanism to be initiated by Malta.

*Magampura Declaration of Commitment to Young People:* This welcomed the establishment of the new Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC) with a secretariat hosted by Sri Lanka and reaffirmed commitment to the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP)(although it was also separately agreed that the existing four CYP centres would be discontinued).

Copies of the CHOGM Communique and the above declarations/statement are attached.

### **Follow-up Action by CLGF**

CLGF will be following-up on the key issues of interest to local government, in particular with regard to taking forward the CHOGM endorsement of the Kampala Declaration on Developmental Local Government and the Monyonyo Statement recommendations with regard to local government's role in the post-2015 development agenda. This will involve keeping in close contact with the Commonwealth Secretariat, notably with regard to the work of the High Level Working Group of Heads of Government to help shape the post 2015 Development Agenda.

In this connection, CLGF has been inputting into work seeking to develop the concept of local government development targets, including the proposal of establishing a special urbanisation goal/target. It will continue to collaborate closely with other members of the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments on post 2015 and Habitat III, at the UN, notably at its next meeting in New York, 13 December. CLGF will be keeping its members closely advised on developments.

CLGF will also seek to take forward the CHOGM endorsement of 2014 as the Year of Local Government, in line with recommendations agreed at the CLGF Executive Committee, 7-8 November. It will shortly be advising its members in more detail on this in the near future.

There will further be close liaison with other AOs in respect of taking forward suggestions for enhancing the institutional status of AOs and their relationship with the Commonwealth Secretariat.