

## **GABORONE STATEMENT ON STRONG, EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

The 2010 meeting of the Board of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, CLGF, hosted in Gaborone, 25-26 February, by the Botswana Ministry of Local Government and the Botswana Association of Local Authorities (BALA), attended by local government leaders, ministers and officials from 20 countries worldwide and preceded by the *Local Government Conference on Strengthening Local Government for Effective Service Delivery and Sustainable Development*, attended by 200 senior practitioners and opened by His Honour, Lt Gen Mompoti S Merafhe, Vice President of the Republic of Botswana:

**EMPHASISING** the key developmental role of representative local government in reducing poverty, promoting economic and social wellbeing, social cohesion and effective delivery of essential services to the community and accordingly its direct responsibility for local provision of the millennium development goals (MDGs);

**RECALLING** the *Aberdeen Agenda 2005*, the *2007 Auckland Accord* and the *2009 Freeport Declaration*, which have been formally endorsed by Commonwealth Heads of Government;

**WELCOMING** the recognition by Commonwealth Heads of Government at their 2009 meeting of the role of representative local government as an essential element in the exercise of democracy and their incorporation of the *Aberdeen Agenda* into the core Commonwealth values and principles as set out in the *Trinidad & Tobago Affirmation of Commonwealth Values and Principles*;

**NOTING** the global and Commonwealth emphasis on the urgency of addressing climate change and the disproportionate impact of climate change on developing countries;

**EMPHASISING** the strong endorsement by Heads of Government of the CLGF's work to promote effective and transparent local government, strengthen its programmes at regional level, and for CLGF to use mechanisms such as the Inclusive Cities Network to promote strategies for managing urbanisation, delivery of the MDGs and promoting inclusive communities;

**STRESSING** that democratic, transparent and participatory local government structures are vital to sustained delivery of community services and to achieving sustainable development;

**WELCOMING** the progress being made by local government in Zimbabwe and the commitment by CLGF to support capacity building strategies with partners in Zimbabwe following the roundtable meeting, held in February 2010;

**NOTING** the recommendations of the 2009 strategic review of CLGF and the actions being taken to put these into effect;

**ENCOURAGED** by the success of the first national local government conference in Botswana, and the resolutions made by participants to strengthen decentralisation through constitutional recognition of local government, improved legislation, adequate financing, support for organised local government through BALA, and the emphasis on sustainable development and the role of local government in local economic development.

## AGREES AS FOLLOWS:

1. To work with the Commonwealth Secretariat and other partners to promote best practice and democratic culture and help CLGF members, both ministries and local governments, to monitor and implement the *Aberdeen Agenda* principles for local democracy and good governance, in such areas as the holding of local elections, constitutional recognition for local government, central-local government partnership, accountability, transparency, inclusiveness and local government capacity-building;
2. To encourage CLGF members to take forward the Commonwealth Vision on Improving Local Government, as set out in the *Freeport Declaration*, in particular consolidating and strengthening local government at a time of world economic downturn and resource constraints and to pursue strategies to improve local government finances, service delivery, engagement with local communities and traditional leaders, central-local government relations, and for recognition of the need for dedicated capacity building to deliver these objectives;
3. To ensure that the recommendations of the CLGF strategic review are implemented by the time of the 2011 CLGF Conference, including consultations of members about the organisation's core values, so as to further strengthen the organisation and improve its effectiveness, taking into account the priorities identified in the CLGF medium term financial strategy and business plan;
4. To implement the Board's decision, re-enforced by the 2009 CHOGM mandate, to develop CLGF regional programmes, including in southern Africa, building on its current project office in Tshwane, South Africa, and working with local partner institutions and development partners;
5. To actively promote gender equality and equity in local government and the empowerment of women, through actions such as the Commonwealth Local Government Gender Action Plan, and mainstreaming gender in its work;
6. To promote and facilitate exchange of ideas and good practices between and among local government stakeholders across the Commonwealth including through the Good Practice Scheme;
7. To engage in strategic partnerships with key partners such as the Commonwealth Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme in order to maximise collaborative ventures, including participation in key policy events such as the 2010 Global Forum in Kampala;
8. To raise awareness of the issues of climate change and their effect on local government, and to support and mobilise members, including through advocacy and promotion of the role of local government in adaptation and mitigation of the effects of climate change
9. To undertake the necessary preparations for the successful holding of the 2011 Commonwealth Local Government Conference in Cardiff UK with the theme '*Energising local economies: partnerships for prosperous communities*'.

CALLS FOR member organisations and development partners to help secure appropriate resources and practical support to take forward the above objectives, including in respect of the development of CLGF regional programmes to build capacity and strengthen local government in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

26 February 2010