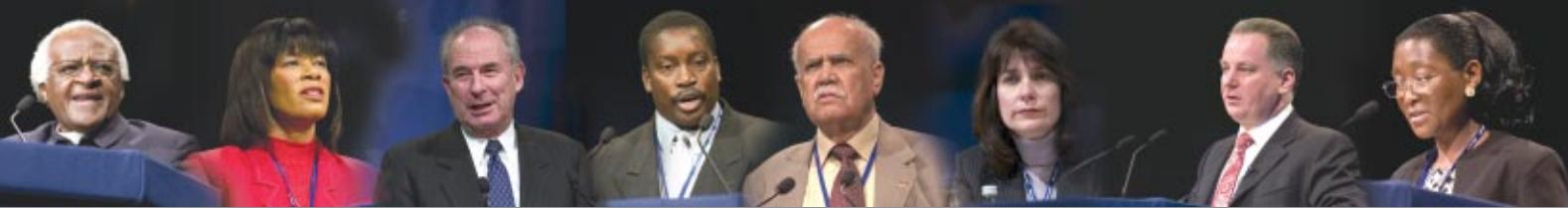




Commonwealth Local Government Conference 2005

Deepening local democracy



CONFERENCE REPORT

Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre
ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND, UK
15-18 March 2005

Report supported by



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A CLGF conference in partnership with Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, and the Scottish Executive



Conference partners

Commonwealth Local Government Forum
Aberdeen City Council
Aberdeenshire Council
The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
The Scottish Executive

Conference chairs

Len Duvall OBE AM, Chairperson, CLGF
Cllr Kate Dean, Leader Aberdeen City Council
Cllr Pat Watters, President, COSLA

Conference Secretaries

Carl Wright, Secretary-General, CLGF
Ann Callaghan, Scottish Executive
Rory Mair, Chief Executive, COSLA
Douglas Patterson, Chief Executive, Aberdeen City Council

The Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) was founded in 1995, as a focus for action on local democracy in the Commonwealth and was endorsed by Commonwealth Heads of Government that year. CLGF ensures that local government's voice is heard within the Commonwealth. It works closely with other Commonwealth and international organisations such as the Commonwealth Secretariat and the United Nations, notably UN-Habitat.

As the local government arm of the Commonwealth, CLGF works to promote and strengthen democratic local government across the Commonwealth, and to encourage the exchange of best practice - through conferences and events, the Commonwealth Local Government Good Practice Scheme, research and information, and working with Commonwealth countries to support the development of democratic values and good governance. CLGF has been actively involved in encouraging and developing local elections and systems, election monitoring, and capacity building support for councillors and councils.

CLGF has more than 170 members in 40 Commonwealth countries. Members include: local government associations, individual local authorities, and ministries with responsibility for local government. Professional bodies, research institutions and other organisations with an interest in local government can join as associate members.

Message from Rt Hon Tony Blair MP, Prime Minister UK



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

Welcome to the Commonwealth Local Government Forum's third Conference being held in Aberdeen this month. With its theme - Deepening Local Democracy - this can be a real opportunity to share experience and ideas about how in all our states we can reform and modernise our institutions of democratic local government so that they can meet the needs of citizens everywhere.

We all share the aim of creating sustainable communities where our citizens want to live and work now and in the future. Sustainable communities are welcoming, prosperous places to live. They have the jobs, homes, schools, healthcare, transport and other services people need. A sustainable community means the needs of all its citizens so that the most disadvantaged aren't left behind.

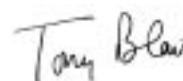
The 1997 Edinburgh CHOGM, which I chaired, recognised that 'effective, elected local government is an important foundation for democracy'. Legitimate and well functioning local democracy is key to the delivery of the basic services - water, sanitation, education, health,

transport and so on, which are vital to tackling poverty and helping governments to deliver the Millennium Development Goals.

The importance of local government in the delivery of these goals has been highlighted by the CLGF in its input into the Commission for Africa. The commissioners were able to take these into account in their deliberations in Accra last October and feed them into their recently published report.

This year sees the 10th anniversary of the CLGF, what is perhaps a good opportunity to take stock and evaluate the achievements of the past and to look at the priorities and challenges for the future. Achievements include the success to date of the Good Practice Scheme and the Local Government Handbook, which provides a valuable reference tool for practitioners in local government throughout the Commonwealth.

The challenges for local government everywhere remain. Above all they are how to make a real difference on the ground to the lives of our citizens, how to help to eradicate poverty and to improve the quality of life for all in a way that is long term and sustainable. The challenge for the CLGF is how it can help make this happen.



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Preface

by the CLGF Chairperson, Cllr John Otekat.

The third Commonwealth Local Government Conference, held in Aberdeen from 15-18 March 2005, was attended by more than 500 delegates from 40 countries, from the Commonwealth and beyond.

The theme of the conference was an important one - Deepening Local Democracy – reflecting the importance of democracy in the Commonwealth's work and CLGF's unique position in being the local government arm of the Commonwealth. The aim was to look at what makes healthy local democracy and see if we could agree a set of core principles and norms that underlie what is considered good practice in local democracy and good governance.

We were very pleased to welcome many excellent speakers, and honoured to welcome Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu as our guest speaker during the closing session. Plenary sessions addressed the shape and health of local government in different regions of the Commonwealth, the links between freedom, development and local democracy, and the role of democratic local government in delivering the UN Millennium Development Goals.

Today the majority of the 53 Commonwealth countries have some form of elected local government. Though the systems may be far from perfect, many countries are experimenting with new forms of representation and inclusiveness. Delegates heard

from cities such as Toronto in Canada, Tshwane in South Africa, Freetown in Sierra Leone, St Mary in Jamaica and from ministries in Bahamas, Ghana, India, Jamaica, New Zealand, Pakistan, and the UK.

Breakaway sessions considered specific issues and themes around principles for democracy and saw first-hand some exciting projects in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire which demonstrated good practice in action.

Special sessions included a very well attended lunchtime session to discuss the recently launched report of the Commission for Africa and a presentation by the Secretary of the Ministry for Local Government in Sri Lanka on the impact of the recent tsunami on local government in that country.

I am pleased to say that we achieved all our aims and more. Delegates had a unique opportunity to learn and share information and experience. And, despite some points being keenly discussed, getting agreement from 40 countries and 500 individuals on a set of principles for good practice for local democracy and good governance is a tremendous achievement. I would like to thank all the speakers and participants for their contributions and the outcomes which will inform CLGF's future work in developing a campaign to deepen local democracy throughout the Commonwealth.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Len Duvall OBE AM for his work over the last three years as chairperson of CLGF, including his chairing of this important conference. We wish him well in all his endeavours and hope that he will keep close links with CLGF in the future. It is a great honour to take over from him as chairperson of CLGF.

Introduction

by the CLGF Secretary-General, Carl Wright

This report provides an overview of the proceedings of the third Commonwealth Local Government Conference and the decisions of the CLGF General Meeting on 18 March 2005.

The conference, the theme of which was Deepening Local Democracy, is timely. This year we are celebrating the tenth anniversary of CLGF. Our achievements show that CLGF has come a long way, and that international organisations and national governments are increasingly recognising the importance of decentralisation and empowering communities to create sustainable development, reduce poverty and deliver the Millennium Development Goals.

I would like to thank our key partners who hosted the conference for their warm welcome and support. They provided much of the planning and administrative support in running the conference and the excellent social events each evening: Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Executive. My thanks to them, all their staff and the staff of CLGF for their hard work in helping to make the conference such a success.

We would also like to thank those agencies that made it possible for delegates from some of the smaller and less affluent states to attend, particularly: the British High Commission and British Council, Sierra Leone; the Canadian International Development Agency; Commonwealth Foundation; Commonwealth Secretariat; Department for International Development, UK; European Commission; NZAID, New Zealand. Our thanks also go to the sponsoring organisations and exhibitors who contributed to the conference and helped to make it such a success.

The task now for CLGF, for our members, and all conference delegates is to take forward the Aberdeen Agenda and look at how we can develop and implement the principles in our member countries. We also look forward to presenting the principles to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Malta in November 2005, and to other key partners such as the EU and UN.

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Summary of conference proceedings

day 1
Tuesday 15 March 2005



Opening ceremony and opening plenary:

Chair: **Len Duvall OBE AM**, Chairperson of CLGF

Opening remarks

Len Duvall OBE AM, Chairperson of CLGF

Welcome address

Cllr Kate Dean, Leader, Aberdeen City Council

Commonwealth Day message by HM Queen Elizabeth II

Scotland and the Commonwealth

Jack McConnell MSP, First Minister of Scotland

Vote of thanks:

Hon Ponts'o Sekatle, Minister for Local Government, Lesotho

CLGF celebrating 10 years supporting local democracy

CLGF video

CLGF: promoting democratic local government

Len Duvall OBE AM, Chairperson of CLGF

Message from Rt Hon Tony Blair MP, Prime Minister, UK

Deepening local democracy in Scotland

Cllr Pat Watters, President, COSLA

The state of local democracy in the Commonwealth:

■ African region presentation by **Cllr John Otekai**

■ Caribbean region presentation by **Hon Portia Simpson Miller**

■ Asia-Pacific presentation by **Basil Morrison**

Decentralisation and the role of local government

Address by **President John Agyekum Kufuor**, President of Ghana, read by **Hon Charles Bintin**, Minister for Local Government and Rural Development

Special address on the Asian tsunami disaster

A M Chandrapala, Secretary, Ministry of Provincial Councils and Local Government

Remarks and announcements

Carl Wright, Secretary-General, CLGF

Opening of Exhibition

by **Tom McCabe MSP**, Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform, Scotland and **David Davidson MSP**, Scottish Parliament

Plenary: Towards an international concept of local democracy

Chair: **Cllr Kate Dean**, Leader, Aberdeen City Council

International norms and standards: building blocks for local democracy

Father Smangaliso Mkhathwana, Mayor of Tshwane, President of United Cities and Local Government

Subsidiarity, local democracy and development

Koos Richelle, Director General, Europe Aid, European Commission

Deepening local democracy in Pakistan

Hon Abdul Razzaq Thahim, Minister for Local Government and Rural Development, Pakistan

Deepening local democracy: Malta, Europe and the Commonwealth

Hon Tonio Borg LLD MP, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, Malta

Questions and discussion

Conference briefing and regional meetings

Lunch in the AECC Arena was hosted by the **Scottish Parliament**. An opening reception was hosted by the **Scottish Executive**, in the Elphinstone Hall, University of Aberdeen

Commonwealth Local Government Conference
Deepening local democracy
15-17 March 2005 Aberdeen, Scotland, UK



Opening ceremony and plenary

Welcoming delegates to the conference and to the city, **Cllr Kate Dean**, Leader of Aberdeen City Council said the conference is held in high regard and praised the level of representation from across the Commonwealth from senior representatives of local, provincial and national government.

"Partnership working is also absolutely vital to the success of an event of this scale and profile," she said. "We are delighted to be working closely with our colleagues and co-hosts at Aberdeenshire Council, the Scottish Executive and COSLA as well as the Commonwealth Local Government Forum to ensure this conference runs smoothly."

Commonwealth Day Message by HM Queen Elizabeth, Head of the Commonwealth

The Queen's Commonwealth Day Message was, for the first time, shown on video at the conference. It focused on young people and education "the golden thread that binds the Commonwealth" and the Millennium Development Goals that relate to education. "Knowledge-based economies are the key to future prosperity and overcoming technological and other inequalities which will be much in the minds of Commonwealth Heads of Government when they meet in Malta in November," she said.

Scotland and the Commonwealth

Launching an International Development Policy for Scotland, Jack McConnell MSP, First Minister of Scotland, said that Scotland would play its part in supporting developing countries.

He highlighted Scotland's good record on women's representation and said that this was an area where Scotland had a particular role in building the capacity of and supporting women's engagement in development and change. Highlighting the theme of the conference, First Minister McConnell said:

"Decentralised government enhances accountability, builds confidence, strengthens democracy and empowers those most disadvantaged to demand change and see it delivered,"

Mr McConnell described how power had been devolved to Scotland in 1999, and what this meant for the people of Scotland, how it was empowering communities and has refreshed their national identity.

"In six years we have seen our country mature and grow, our economy strengthen and employment rise, our public services achieve more, and poverty decrease – particularly amongst children and pensioners," he said.

Hon Ponts'o Sekatle, Minister for Local Government from Lesotho, thanked the First Minister for his important speech

and the issues he raised on devolution. She also thanked the Aberdeen hosts on behalf of all the delegates for their warm welcome and excellent arrangements.

CLGF: promoting democratic local government

Following a video celebrating CLGF's tenth anniversary, CLGF Chairperson Len Duvall OBE AM said that it was a good time to reflect on and discuss local democracy. He looked at some of the ideas in the background paper, and how it demonstrated the link between democracy and freedom.

Mr Duvall said that though the different countries of the Commonwealth may be at different stages in developing local democracy, there are common principles and indicators and the challenge would be how these are turned into practice. He said that the people attending the conference – senior local government leaders and experts – were the best people to have this discussion and set an agenda for local democracy and good governance.

Highlighting CLGF's tenth anniversary, Mr Duvall pointed to CLGF's achievements in the last decade including its recently achieved official status that allows it to have a strong voice with national governments.

Mr Duvall said that partnership working is crucial and local government has a key role in delivering the Millennium Development Goals through providing essential services and we must encourage development agencies to integrate local government in their plans.

He said that the challenge for CLGF and its members over the next decade is to work towards local democracy throughout the Commonwealth and reach out to those countries needing support.

Deepening local democracy in Scotland

Speaking on behalf of councils in Scotland, **Cllr Pat Watters**, President of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), described the impact on local councils of Scottish devolution. He said that, though there had been some differences, the bond between local government and the Scottish government had become stronger and that local government and local people had benefited. He cited areas such as education where working together had helped to drive forward improvements.

"It is important that local government recognises national priorities and that national government recognises local priorities," he said. "And it must be accepted that local government is a creature of the electorate, not of the government. Subsidiarity means devolving decisions down to the local level where appropriate."

Cllr Watters said that his vision for Scotland was of a local government as an equal partner in the governance of Scotland with equal status and authority.



The state of local democracy in the Commonwealth

Africa: Local democracy has made great strides in some countries in Africa, said **Cllr John Otekat**, President of the Uganda Local Government Association. He cited South Africa and Uganda as countries where local government is written into the constitution and spheres of government are working together. Cameroon, Kenya, Tanzania, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria and others are all undergoing constitutional reforms to strengthen local government, recognising the importance of local government in delivering services to the poor, delivering the Millennium Development Goals and tackling problems such as HIV/AIDS.

Caribbean: Congratulating CLGF on its tenth anniversary, **Hon Portia Simpson Miller**, Minister for Local Government, Community Development and Sports in Jamaica, said that the Caribbean region had seen the benefits of belonging to CLGF, through workshops, seminars, training programmes, and support for local government associations. She said that the recent seminar on local democracy in the Caribbean had brought fresh energy to those working in local government. Many Caribbean states are currently reorganising or setting up local government. The minister said that she hoped that with the support of CLGF and other international organisations local democracy would be taken to new heights in the Caribbean.

Asia-Pacific: As the Asia-Pacific region is very diverse, ranging from very small states to larger countries such as Australia and India, local government in the region is also diverse, said **Basil Morrison**, President of Local Government New Zealand. In India, local government has constitutional recognition and one third of seats are reserved for women. In other countries, local government is still emerging with reforms and innovations happening across the region. He said that CLGF's work in the region reflects this diversity.

Decentralisation to deliver development and deepen democracy

The address on *The role of local government in decentralisation* by **President John Agyekum Kufuor**, President of Ghana, was read by **Hon Charles Bintin**, Minister for Local Government and Rural Development.

"Decentralisation as a policy has become an important development strategy globally and, in most cases today, development assistance to developing countries is even tied up with the implementation of decentralisation and the promotion of equity and participation in governance."

"The present local government structure in Ghana took firm root in 1988 and since then we have never looked back. The thrust of Ghana's decentralisation policy has been to promote popular participation and ownership of local government by shifting the process of governance from command to consultative processes and by devolving power, competence

and resources to the district (local authority) level.

"Empowering and strengthening local authorities is crucial in our democratic and development process. We must recognise the decentralisation process as a means of achieving local government and community-driven development and thereby deepening local democracy."

Tsunami paralysed local services

The impact of the tsunami disaster on local government in Sri Lanka has been profound, **Mr Chandrapala**, Secretary to the Ministry of Provincial Councils and Local Government in Sri Lanka, told the conference.

Speaking on behalf of the Deputy Minister, Mr Chandrapala told the conference that damages occurred in four municipal council areas, eight urban council areas, and 26 pradeshiya sabha areas in coastal regions. Altogether 70 local authorities were affected and the total damage is estimated as 2,833 million rupees (approximately £15 million).

"It has totally paralysed the connectivity, service delivery mechanism and the local authority level infrastructure including thoroughfares and sanitation facilities. Destruction caused by the tsunami has made local authorities unable to deliver the services for the people living in their areas," said Mr Chandrapala.

He also told how loss of income through rates and taxes has dragged them into a deplorable situation, with the scope and damage to assets beyond their capacity for reconstruction.

Mr Chandrapala described the rehabilitation and reconstruction plans and developments so far, and the help of neighbouring local authorities in assisting with emergency plans.

He thanked UK authorities and others for their support and said that partnerships were already being established between local authorities and those in the areas affected by the tsunami.

Opening of the exhibition



Scottish Minister Tom McCabe (second from right) and David Davidson MSP (right) opened the exhibition at the conference. Pictured with them are Douglas Patterson, Cllr Kate Dean and Len Duvall OBE.

Towards an international concept of local democracy



Building blocks for local democracy in South Africa

Father Smangaliso Mkhatchwa, Mayor of Tshwane and Co-President of United Cities and Local Government described the role of the Commonwealth and its importance as a forum for discussion of values, norms and standards in local governance and democracy.

Describing the experience of developing local government in South Africa, he said that the South African experience was unique and widely regarded as progressive as it has local government embedded in the constitution and demands that the spheres of government (national, provincial and local) must interact. He said that over the ten years it had evolved to become a unique model in local democracy: sufficient decentralisation of powers, functions and responsibilities; more funding spread around the smaller and less well-off municipalities; becoming more innovative to attract investment; a ward system with ward committees and leaders directly elected by residents; the izimbizo system, building on the old tradition of debate, where citizens can have a dialogue with government; and involving development partners in strategic activities. However, he said that there were still some weaknesses mostly due to lack of capacity and capability.

"The South African local governance is informed by the desire to extend democracy as an overriding value of good governance, Administration is but a small and necessary portion of the democratic process," he said.

"As we continue to be partners in the global movement for effective local governance, we will continue to share our experience and find inspiration from the best practices by our counterparts in other parts of Africa and the world. This conference provides the opportunity for both."

Subsidiarity, local democracy and development

Describing the EU principle of subsidiarity, **Koos Richelle**, Director General of Europe Aid at the European Commission (EC) said that the EC fully recognises the role local governments play in the fight against poverty and improving local democracy and governance. He described the move towards decentralisation both within the EU and worldwide, with the European Commission increasing its support to decentralisation in a number of countries.

Addressing the EC's role in supporting Poverty Reduction Strategies, he said that in African-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP)

countries, EC assistance in decentralisation programmes has amounted to 300 million euros, and some of the money for programmes around water supply and sanitation was also being channelled through local government. He said that EC support focuses mainly on resource allocation, capacity building, and the relationship between central, regional and local governments.

Deepening local democracy in Pakistan

In 1999 Pakistan announced a far reaching reform of the establishment of a decentralised system of local government to ensure citizen involvement in planning.

Hon Abdul Razzaq Thahim, Minister for Local Government and Rural Development in Pakistan described the changes that were needed to make the system more participatory and accountable, to improve service delivery and tackle poverty.

"The idea that good governance is linked with poverty reduction runs through the technical and political objectives of devolution." he said.

He outlined the wider responsibilities that are being devolved to local government and the structures and set-ups of the new system to create a framework of accountable local government, including monitoring committees and citizen oversight. There has also been a quantum leap to address gender inequality by reserving a third of local government seats for women to ensure their full participation.

Digital revolution brings government closer to the citizen

In Malta, the smallest and most densely populated area in Europe, e-government has put local councils at the heart of getting closer to the citizen. According to **Hon Tonio Borg LLD MP**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Justice and Home Affairs in Malta, all councils have been given the opportunity to be e-government agents and provide the interface for all government services, not just services run by the council. He said that local government has been instrumental in bringing government closer to the people by helping to bridge the digital divide, and the partnership between central and local government has made it possible to offer wider access to services and decision-making.

Summary

record of conference proceedings

day 2
Wednesday 16 March 2005



Plenary: Local democracy delivering quality services to the community

Chair: CLGF Vice Chair **Cllr John Otekat**, President, Uganda Local Government Association

Delivering quality services: a Canadian perspective
Cllr Sandra Bussin, Deputy Mayor, City of Toronto

Localising the MDGs and good urban governance
Paul Taylor, Chief, Urban Development Branch, UN Habitat on behalf of **Dr Anna Tibaijuka**, Executive Director, UN-Habitat

Local democracy the Pacific way

Hon Chris Carter, Minister of Local Government, New Zealand

Questions and discussion

Breakaway sessions 1

Local Africa 2005 Scottish launch of the report of the Commission for Africa Sponsored by the **UK Local Government Alliance for International Development** and the **Commission for Africa**

Plenary: The Commonwealth delivering local democracy and good governance

Chair: CLGF Vice Chair **Hon Ponto Sekatle**, Minister of Local Government, Lesotho

CLGF activities supporting local democracy and good governance

Mayor Hon Cllr Robert Montague, Jamaica Local Government Association

Address by **Hon Frank Nweke Jnr**, Minister for Local Government, Nigeria, on behalf of **HE President Olusegun Obasanjo GCFR**

Joined-up Commonwealth: working in partnership to support democracy and good governance

HE Rt Hon Don McKinnon, Commonwealth Secretary General

Breakaway sessions 2

An evening reception was hosted by the **Convention of Scottish Local Authorities** followed by a gala dinner hosted by the **Lord Provost, Aberdeen City Council** in the Beach Ballroom, Aberdeen



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Local democracy

delivering quality services to the community

Delivering quality services: a Canadian perspective

Innovation and creativity are essential in any organisation that wishes to thrive and prosper in an environment of rapid change, **Clr Sandra Bussin**, Deputy Mayor, City of Toronto told delegates. She described three innovations that have been introduced in Toronto, and how citizens have been involved in developing and implementing the programmes. One initiative - Listening to Toronto - looked at ways of improving citizen participation and consultation resulting in a major public consultation in 2004 to look at the city's strengths and challenges and input into the 2004 budget.

Localising the MDGs and good urban governance

Addressing the conference on behalf of UN-Habitat Executive Director Dr Anna Tibaijuka, **Paul Taylor**, said that though the Millennium Development Goals are global, they must be implemented locally but many cities were unaware of them. He said that local authorities must be empowered to act and be part of the national planning of strategies to implement the MDGs and raise awareness and described the UN-Habitat project - the Urban Millennium Partnership: Localising MDGs - to help develop local action plans to achieve local MDG targets. He said that democracy and good governance were essential ingredients and for local government to reduce poverty and implement the MDGs it must embrace participatory and inclusive good urban governance.

"Halving the number of people without access to clean water and sanitation requires not only more resources but also needs the active engagement of empowered, responsive and accountable local authorities that are able to gain and harness the commitment of civil society," he said.

Local democracy the Pacific way

Hon Chris Carter, Minister of Local Government, New Zealand described the local government set-up in New Zealand and recent reforms which include councils having to carry out greater community consultation to develop their areas. Councils must work with their communities to identify what they want for the future of their area. A Long Term Council Community Plan is a planning document that provides a formal record of the community's expectations and sets out how the council will contribute to achieving the community outcomes.

Mr Carter also described how councils are working together to develop joint services and strengthen democracy and said that central government has an important role in making local democracy work and establishing a framework within which they have freedom to determine how services are provided.

Breakaway sessions 1

1 Local government: a full partner - the impact of decentralisation, constitutional and legal recognition, on deepening local democracy

Chaired by **Hon Charles Bintin**, Minister for Local Government in Ghana, the session focused on the foundations for democracy, including intergovernmental relations, constitutional and legal recognition and decentralisation. **Prof Victor Ayeni**, Director, Governance and Institutional Development Division, Commonwealth Secretariat said that formal local government structures must relate to the community, must be planned and ensure the participation of civil society. **Clr Anne Bennison**, Australian Local Government Association, said she believed that constitutional recognition is essential for strong local government, while **Jon Harris**, Strategic Director, COSLA, UK, said that decentralisation provides greater freedom and flexibility for local government to advance community well-being if carried out successfully.

2 Positive intergovernmental relations for local democracy

Chaired by **Hon Alfred Gray**, Minister for Local government in the Bahamas, the session highlighted the need to empower people to participate in governance.

Dame Mavis Macdonald DCB, Permanent Secretary, ODPM, UK and President of CAPAM talked about creating sustainable communities, local area agreements as contracts between central and local government and wider partnerships. **Dr John-Mary Kauzya**, Chief of Governance and Public Administration, UNDDSMS, said that decentralised governance is increasingly being favoured as the most suitable form of governance for poverty reduction, but must ensure community empowerment and effective partnerships. **Dr Makhosi Khoza**, Chief Executive, South African Local Government Association described intergovernmental structures in South Africa and how intergovernmental relations should ensure grass roots democracy.

3 A robust electoral system at the local level

The session, chaired by **Mayor C M Dinesh Mani** from Cochin in India, looked at local election issues from voter awareness and participation to electoral systems, and what constitutes a free and fair election. **Mayor Murchison Brown**, Chair of the Trinidad and Tobago Local Government Association, looked at free and fair elections and how to provide a safe and secure political environment. **Matthew Neuhaus**, Director of the Political Affairs Division, Commonwealth Secretariat and **Sam Younger**, Chair of the UK Electoral Commission, also spoke.

Local Africa 2005

4 Democratic checks and balances

Checks and balances are important to ensure accountability and transparency. Session chair **Mayor William David Fonseca** from Belize, said that the session would focus on scrutiny and the role of the opposition in local government. **Andrew Firmin**, Commonwealth Foundation, looked at the role of civil society as a key partner in strong local democracy. **Zaya Yeebo**, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, UK described the various forms of scrutiny, and said that multi-partyism is the starting point for accountable and transparent government and that oppositions at local level need capacity to challenge and scrutinize effectively. Participants also discussed different voting models and said that a system was needed that encourages participation and engages all parties as well as civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders.

5 Fiscal decentralisation, tax raising powers and local autonomy

Chaired by **Hon George Chaponda**, Minister of Local Government, Malawi, the session focused on effective fiscal decentralisation, including experiences from Australia, South Africa and the UK presented by **Llandiwe Mahlangu**, Chair of the Development Bank of South Africa, **Prof Graham Sansom**, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia, and **Ian Parker**, New Local Government Network, UK. The group felt that a legal framework was needed to ensure money follows powers and there should be a full framework for transferring funds, particularly in developing countries.

6 The democratic deficit: increasing voter participation

The session, chaired by **Mayor M K Sikongo**, Windhoek, Namibia, looked at the causes of voter apathy particularly amongst young people, and some practical innovations to boost turnout. **Andrew Ellis**, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance and **Anthony Staddon** from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association described some innovations to engage young people including schools councils in Tanzania, student parliaments in India and the Commonwealth Youth Parliament. **Wilbert Y Dogoli**, President of the National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana, looked at the causes of low turnout in local elections and suggested an open voter registration system, more voter education, more interaction between local government and its citizens through consultation and town and other meetings, and encouraging the media to include more discussions with local government representatives.



Delegates endorse Commission for Africa report

A Scottish launch of the report of the Commission for Africa was held at the conference by the Commission in conjunction with the UK Local Government Alliance for International Development. An audience of more than 270 delegates from Africa and the UK, including senior mayors, leaders and ministers with responsibility for local government, welcomed the report and said they would like to see swift implementation of the recommendations, particularly those relating to local government.

Speaking on behalf of Commissioner Dr Anna Tibaijuka, UN-Habitat's Paul Taylor said:

"It is in our common interest to help develop local democracy in Africa for the benefit of its people and the rest of the world."

Ian Richards from the Commission for Africa asked local authorities to help build Africa's capacity by improving local authority staff training and development systems. "There is a distinct lack of capacity among local authorities," he said. "They have problems in recruiting skilled staff and in keeping them equipped and motivated to do their jobs."

The session was chaired by William Saunders, Chair of the UK Local Government Alliance for International Development. Other speakers included Cllr John Otekat, President of the Uganda Local Government Association.

Through its networks and partners, the UK Alliance, of which CLGF is a founding partner, will seek maximum local government support for the report in the lead up to the G8 Summit later this year.

and good governance

CLGF supporting local democracy and good governance

Mayor Hon Cllr Robert Montague, Jamaica Local Government Association outlined some of CLGF's key achievements and said that he had been involved in several CLGF activities over the last year, including the Caribbean and Pacific symposia, the Good Practice Scheme in Jamaica, and as an observer at the Sierra Leone local government elections. In participating in these activities, he said that: "I realised that local government is not only local, it is global. Many of the challenges and issues are the same all over the world. My presence, and that of colleagues, was a demonstration of the value of Commonwealth countries learning from each other".

He described how small states are particularly vulnerable to globalisation and the effects of natural disasters and said that strengthening local democracy helps to stabilise countries to deal with such disasters and complemented CLGF on its swift action in response to the Asian tsunami.

Local democracy to achieve development goals

Hon Frank Nweke Jnr, Minister for Local Government, Nigeria, spoke on behalf of HE President Olusegun Obasanjo GCFR, Chairperson in Office of the Commonwealth.

Welcoming the recognition that the Commonwealth Heads of Government had given to local government as a foundation for local democracy, including their endorsement of constitutional and legal recognition for local government, he said that local governments are the nexus of accelerated growth, development and democratisation.

"In new democracies, whose unsteady national democratic institutions are based on weak traditions of local autonomy, democratic local governments are even more critical to strengthening democracy. Functional local participatory governing institutions necessarily provide the foundation on which democracy and development can be anchored," he said.

"The incentive to participate in government processes is stronger locally than nationally because local governments are closest to citizens. Therefore, a way to deepen democracy nationally is to deepen democracy locally."

"Deepening democracy at the local level will ameliorate conflicts while promoting collaboration between global economic structures and institutions as they interact with local community-based, non-governmental and other civil society organisations which seek the expansion of the scope of democracy as a part of the larger effort to achieve sustainable development globally. Deepening local democracy is critical to our desire for a more equitable

sharing of the benefits of globalisation as well as the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals... and the goals of the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD)."

He stressed the importance of local governments delivering services, participatory and accountability mechanisms and responding to local needs in NEPAD's good governance concept and pointed to the African peer Review Mechanism as a good example of creating local participation and democratisation.

"I would like to acknowledge the giant strides the CLGF has recorded, particularly after the two conferences in 2000 and 2003. I am aware that membership of CLGF has continued to grow and the Forum has provided various forms of technical support to capacity building efforts and development projects in member states."

The power of democracy

Commonwealth Secretary-General HE Rt Hon Don McKinnon emphasised that local democracy plays an important part in promoting development, eradicating poverty and improving quality of life.

He referred to the Abuja meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government where they had called for the constitutional and legal recognition of local government.

"South Africa, India, Ghana and several other countries have given that formal recognition in their constitutions. That is a step which I commend to all other Commonwealth countries," he said.

Mr McKinnon described how the Commonwealth Secretariat and CLGF are working together on a number of projects to support and strengthen local democracy, including election observing, training and institution building. He said that local democracy can only respond to the needs of the community if: it has proper powers and adequate funding; local democracy is genuinely local and as close to the people as possible; and it is genuinely democratic. He said that many countries have systems of local government and local administration but they must be democratic and keep deepening that democracy.

"Democratic systems will always work best when they are properly embedded in local cultures and allowed to develop alongside traditional models of governance. They must be designed, owned, nurtured and defended by the people – and that starts at local level. In an age of increasing scepticism about politics and politicians, it is crucial to reaffirm the power of democracy to change people's lives," he said.

"The CLGF plays an important role in ensuring that all citizens feel they have ownership of their local democracy."

Breakaway sessions 2

7 Open local government: accountability and transparency

The session was chaired by **Hon Pio I Wong**, Minister of Local Government, Housing, Squatter Settlement and Environment, Fiji. **S M Ligomeke**, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Malawi, said that goals included getting public trust and that fighting corruption is fundamental to tackling poverty and improving accountability. He said that reliable monitoring and evaluation systems are needed for tracking transparency and accountability. **Michael Lippe**, Urban Advisor for Transparency International, described some of the tools to support transparency in local governance and the importance of having a comprehensive system in place. Delegates agreed that information should be made public, citizens should be empowered to hold public officials to account, and budget-making should be participatory. **Jean Pierre Mbassi** and **George Matovu** from the Municipal Development Programme also spoke.

8 Representing the whole community

Chaired by **Cllr Ken Bodfish OBE**, LGIB, UK the session looked at making local democracy inclusive, in particular making sure that marginalised groups are represented.

Ruth Adupa from the Uganda Local Government Association described affirmative action in Uganda to help empower women, young people and people with disabilities. She said that civil society is important in monitoring and evaluation and councils are required to publicise information such as income, expenditure and projects. **Dr Jatin Modi**, President of the All-India Institute for Local Self Government, said that councils should facilitate active political involvement by citizens, but the quality of participation would affect the quality of decision-making and that stakeholders should be well informed. **Stuart Mole OBE**, Director General of the Royal Commonwealth Society, outlined three principles of inclusion: equality, diversity and respecting the rights of others.

9 Measuring good governance: UN Habitat's Urban Governance Index

Chaired by **Mayor Obed Mlaba**, eThekwini, South Africa, the session discussed the UN Habitat Urban Governance Index(UGI). **Fahmy Ismail** of UN Habitat, Sri Lanka, looked at the experience in Sri Lanka. **Ferris Zimunya**, Secretary General, Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe described how through a partnership between UCAZ, CLGF and UN Habitat, the UGI had been applied to five Zimbabwean cities and helped to compare councils and identify good practice. **Paul Taylor**, Chief of Urban Development Branch, UN Habitat

described the Urban Governance Campaign and the development of the Index and **Paul Oquist** from UNDP, Pakistan talked about measuring governance in Pakistan.

10 Modernising service delivery: better local services

Hon Musikari Kombo, Minister of Local Government, Kenya chaired the session on the relationship between national and local government in setting standards and delivering services. **Charles Katiza**, Secretary-General of the African Union of Local Authorities looked at forms of decentralisation in Africa, and how these had impacted on service delivery. **Dr Wendy Thompson CBE**, Cabinet Office, UK described examples of innovation to improve service delivery. She said that transparency involves setting clear standards and measuring performance and the key to better services is involving the public in their design. She said that while services should be free at the point of delivery, who provides them may vary and should be based on what is most effective.

11 The new localism: reaching out into the community

The session was chaired by **Mayor Milton Brown**, President of the Association of Local Government Authorities of Jamaica, and focused on the challenges of engaging stakeholders in local government and encouraging effective citizen participation. **Mayor Steve Bullock**, London Borough of Lewisham, UK described initiatives to encourage citizen participation including citizen panels and juries, and a 'young mayor' to connect with young people. Jim Knight, CE of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities said that local government must be creative and have structures that bring local leaders as close as possible to the public and described some Canadian examples including resource centres, electronic media, community outreach, open days, surveys and referenda. **Dr Bishnu Ragoonath**, University of West Indies, Trinidad said that councils and councillors must be proactive and reach out to communities.

12 E-governance

Hon Dr Richard Nduhuura, Minister of State, Uganda chaired the session which looked at the challenges of infrastructure, integration and e-governance.

Dr Ekwow Spio Garbah, CEO of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation looked at the growth in e-governance and what makes a successful e-governance initiative. **Puvan J Selvanathan** from Intecture in Malaysia described an e-governance project in Malaysia and how they had overcome some of the problems and challenges. **Colin McKay** from the Scottish Executive looked at the wider issues of e-governance being much more than the use of computers. Protecting identity and confidentiality was also discussed.

Summary

record of conference proceedings

Study tours

Launch of Commonwealth Local Government Handbook 2005

Rt Hon Nick Raynsford MP, Minister for Local Government and the Regions, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, UK

Prof P S Reddy, University of KwaZulu Natal

Nicholas Barr, Project Director, Publications UK

Plenary: The Commonwealth delivering local democracy and good governance

Chair: **Len Duvall OBE**, Chairperson, CLGF

Innovation in local democracy and international learning

Rt Hon Nick Raynsford MP, Minister for Local Government and the Regions, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, UK

Panel: **Mayor Basil Morrison**, President, Local Government New Zealand

Nomayana Hangana, Deputy Minister for Provincial and Local Government, South Africa

Cllr John Otekat, President, Uganda Local Authorities Association

Hon Portia Simpson Miller, Minister of Local Government, Community Development and Sport, Jamaica

Questions and discussion

Summing-up

Chairperson, **Len Duvall OBE AM**

Closing session

Chair: **Cllr Pat Watters**, President, COSLA

Transforming service delivery

Doug Tonner, BT Government Scotland

Decentralisation and local democracy

Lewis Macdonald MSP, Deputy Minister for Finance and Public Service, Scotland, UK

Guest Speaker

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu

Announcement of venue of 2007 conference

Closing address

Len Duvall, OBE AM, Chairperson of CLGF

Vote of thanks

Cllr John Otekat, President Uganda Local Government Association

Lunch was hosted by the **University of Aberdeen** in the Elphinstone Hall **A closing reception and ceilidh** was hosted by **Aberdeenshire Council**



Study tours

Down by the river side

Delegates visited two environmental projects to see community involvement in river management in action.

The Ythan Life project is a partnership of Aberdeenshire Council and government agencies working with the community to restore the Ythan River. Delegates met local people who have been involved in the project to learn how new spawning places have been created for trout, overshadowing trees have been removed and replaced by broad leafed trees to improve the river environment. Delegates also visited the Scotstown Moor nature reserve.



Pupil participation is kids stuff for Kirkhill

Pupils at the Kirkhill Primary School welcomed delegates to their school and introduced them to a panel meeting, chaired and run by the children. Pupils gave a presentation on the Pupil Council on how they see themselves as participating members of the schools and wider community, where they have been involved in a number of council initiatives such as the Planning for Real project. The pupils' views are represented through the Pupil Council, with representatives from each year, elected by their peers. Delegates watched a Pupil Council meeting in action.

The people's voice

A community owned and run media centre, the Station House Community Media Unit gives community groups and individuals opportunities to gain skills and be involved in local radio and community magazines to give local people a voice. Delegates met some of the young people involved, many from deprived backgrounds. They saw how the centre runs and how the young people use radio, video and print media, to get information and messages across on topical issues such as bullying and teenage pregnancy.

Young displays

The Mastrick Young Peoples' project is working with 15-25 year olds in three areas of Aberdeen, involving them in discussions about arts, crime, justice, health, homelessness,

jobs and open space, to influence decision makers. The themes reflect those in Aberdeen's Youth Strategy. Delegates visited a marketplace where a number of local youth groups had displays demonstrating a variety of projects and initiatives that promote and support the role of young people in local democracy.

Planning for real: a model consultation

Planning for Real is being used in Aberdeen to raise local issues that can only be tackled jointly by service providers and the community. A Planning for Real event is organised and run by the community to draw out issues from a community perspective. The consultation invites ideas and suggestions by posting them on a model of the area. After learning about and trying out the Planning for Real system to see how it could be applied to their own work, delegates participated in the final briefing session for a Planning for Real exercise that was held on 19 March.

Rural futures

Delegates visited the Kirk Centre, Ellon in Aberdeenshire to meet local people who are involved in rural partnership activities. They heard about a wide range of economic development projects and how the local community have influenced their own futures as well as the techniques used for consultation and how the economic development strategies of the council and its partners have been influenced.

Small towns, big ideas

Delegates visited to the small town of Ellon to see local democracy in action - how the community have been involved in community planning for the town's development. Ellon is one of the towns in the award-winning Aberdeenshire Towns partnership where the local community are working with other agencies to improve the well-being of citizens. Delegates were able to learn about small town development, and community and business participation.

Making devolution work

Delegates met members of the Scottish Parliament, including members of the Local Government and Transport committees. They heard about central-local relations after devolution in Scotland and were given an overview of local government in Scotland before and after devolution and the impact of devolution. This was followed by group discussions on particular themes and then a panel question-time discussion to find out how devolution is working on the ground - how parliamentarians are working cooperatively with local government in Scotland.

Councillors have many roles

Following a video showing the different aspects of the work of a councillor in north east Scotland, delegates met a panel of representatives from Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council to find out first hand about the diverse role of a councillor in Scotland, including working with constituents, with partners, lobbying national government, scrutiny and working in different types of council. They questioned them about their work and compared this to councillors in other Commonwealth countries.

Diversity and local decision-making

Delegates met people from a number of ethnic communities who live in Aberdeen and the surrounding area. After being welcomed by the Chair of the Grampian Racial Equality Centre, delegates discussed local and wider issues with representatives of different ethnic groups, including education, employment and participation and learned about how these groups are engaging with local government and how their voice is making a difference in Aberdeen.



Launch of the 2005 Handbook

Launching the 2005 Commonwealth Local Government Handbook at the conference, **Rt Hon Nick Raynsford MP**, Minister for Local Government and the Regions, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, UK said:

"This is the latest edition of the Handbook, brought up-to-date with contributions reflecting arrangements in all countries of the Commonwealth, showing the rich diversity in arrangements and structures in each of the 53 countries."

"It is essential that we make best use of the information. It is a catalyst for spreading best practice and setting up partnerships to bring together local government organisations in all the 53 countries."

Also speaking at the launch, **Prof P S Reddy**, from the University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa said that the Handbook was an "innovative and bold research project".

"CLGF has played a crucial role in bringing together theory and practice," he said.

Speaking on behalf of the publisher, Publications UK, **Nicholas Barr**, Project Director, said: "We are very lucky, as Commonwealth citizens, to have an organisation such as CLGF and through them an opportunity to share knowledge and best practice on citizenship."

The Handbook also includes a discussion paper on deepening local democracy as a background paper for the conference.

A strategy for local

Making a difference

Inclusive democracy at local level is ultimately the key to building sustainable communities and local government is the linchpin for championing the needs of local communities, said UK Minister for Local Government and the Regions, **Rt Hon Nick Raynsford MP**.

"Even though all of us represent very different communities facing different issues and challenges, I think we can still establish common themes and common principles to define a strategy for local democracy," he said.

He said that sharing good practice helps build understanding and strengthens everyone's own responses. He stressed that the plan must be practical to help local governments across the Commonwealth.

Mr Raynsford focused on five key principles: good leadership; effective, inclusive participation; giving local government the freedom and flexibility to respond to the needs of its area; transparency and accountability to local people; and, building confidence and trust in local government.

He said that the Commonwealth was a useful institution to bring together and share expertise to increase the effectiveness of local government.

"We must try to use the institution of the Commonwealth to best effect, to build on the good practice that exists and deepen our understanding of what is being done throughout our 53 countries to meet the needs of local communities. The Commonwealth Local Government Forum has a very valuable role to play in this process."

He congratulated the CLGF on its tenth anniversary and said that this was a good opportunity to look forward to the challenges and milestones ahead as well as celebrate past achievements, including the Commonwealth Local Government Handbook and the Good Practice Scheme.

"The key measure of success is making a positive difference to the lives of people in local communities throughout the Commonwealth. So now the challenge is to make the most practical use of all that we have learnt and all that has been achieved so far," he concluded.

Developing a strategy

From the chair, Len Duvall OBE introduced the draft statement on principles of good practice in local democracy and good government for comment and discussion. Four CLGF members made their comments and reviewed the discussions of the conference before a wider discussion of all the delegates.

Basil Morrison, President, Local Government New Zealand outlined a number of key principles that had been discussed that are particularly important: representation; legitimacy; inclusiveness; and being effective advocates. He described some of the barriers to local democracy and how to overcome them, particularly authority – councils must have

democracy

meaningful responsibilities and the level of autonomy to act and respond to their communities; and encouraging communities to develop the habit of voting and taking part in local democratic practices to combat voter apathy.

Local government must strengthen its implementation capacity to be able to respond to the needs of its citizens, said **Nomayana Hangana**, Deputy Minister for Provincial and Local Government, South Africa. She said that key principles that underpin democracy include: targeting services for the poor; equity in the allocation and use of funds; effective decentralisation of spending; reinforcing objectives for each sphere of government and participative decision-making. She said that she would like to see councils across the Commonwealth having clear performance indicators for deepening local democracy, and clear monitoring and evaluation systems that fully involve citizens.

Local government must be recognised as a distinct sphere of government with responsibility for local self-government and sustainable development, according to **Hon Portia Simpson Miller**, Minister of Local Government, Community Development and Sport, Jamaica said: "Central government and local government must engender good working relationships and foster co-operation for the greater good of our peoples." She said that there must be clearly defined roles and responsibilities, with the legal framework and independent resources required to enable local government to discharge its responsibilities.

Clr John Otekat, President, Uganda Local Government Association, said that the role of local government must be recognised constitutionally and legally. He looked at representation, gender balance and elections.

In the discussion that followed, delegates raised questions and comments about accountability, sustainable planning, regular consultation, decision making and responsiveness, clearly defined structures for consultation, the role of civil society and HIV/AIDS. Gender equality and how to empower women was raised by many delegates and delegates also emphasised the importance of good leadership.



Closing session

Technology to transform service delivery

Doug Tonner, BT Government Scotland said that BT was delighted to be part of bringing the event to Scotland. Highlighting the benefits of using technology to transform government and services, he said that it was important to ensure that the processes are good, not just the technology, and must relate to the citizen. He said that technology should be part of a bigger transformation and change process to enable staff to do their jobs better and motivate them.

Technology to transform service delivery

Lewis Macdonald MSP, Deputy Minister for Environment and Public Development, Scotland, described how the Aberdeen Agenda will be part of the story of what happened in Scotland to change the world in 2005.

"President Mbeki talked about resolving conflict, making poverty history, developing Africa; but he started with the need to nurture and consolidate democracy. The contribution of the Aberdeen Agenda must be to that process, of making democracy effective at local level. Deepening democracy is the starting point of tackling poverty, conflict and under-development: it is the best way there is to give people control over their own lives," he said.

"Democracy is key, and in Scotland as in Africa, democracy came about only as a result of a struggle for democratic rights, and that struggle for democracy also brought with it action to tackle poverty and end injustice... Politicians forget people's thirst for democracy at their peril."

Addressing the democratic deficit, he looked at a number of innovations to increase voter turnout and widen access.

Strengthening democracy at local level

Thank you chairperson, ministers, councillors, provost, ladies and gentlemen, friends.

I come from South Africa which has been celebrating a whole decade of freedom: ten years like the Forum is celebrating its tenth anniversary. So I too, with the minister and Mayor Mkhathwana, bring you greetings from the freed democratic South Africa. Ten years ago we would not have been able to use these epithets about South Africa. We were not free and by definition not democratic. We were excluded from any meaningful participation in the political processes taken so much for granted in any normal society. We had no political clout and so had no say in how resources in education, in health, in housing, were allocated.

Bringing down apartheid

We are free today very largely because of the wonderful support that we received from the international community where committed people were prepared to boycott South African goods for us, to hold vigils and protest marches on our behalf and even to be arrested for our sakes. Our victory over the viciousness of apartheid is also your victory in the international community. I take every opportunity to say on behalf of millions of my compatriots and on my own behalf, thank you for helping us to become free and democratic.

We have to acknowledge the role of our liberation movements which were given bases by our wonderful African friends. Many of the so called frontline states, Botswana, Lesotho, Zambia, Mozambique and Tanzania, ran the gauntlet of the wrath of the South African Defence Force with its hot pursuit policies. You, in those countries and elsewhere, exposed yourselves to attacks and worse on our behalf and strained your limited resources in welcoming our exiled compatriots to whom you gave asylum. Our thanks to you are heartfelt even though wholly inadequate. We owe more than we can say to you too, our fellow Africans. Thank you.

Thus we could say there were these two indispensable levels of pressure – from the international community and from our liberation movements. But I contend that they would almost certainly have come to nothing had there not been the third level, that of our people on the ground.

The death knell of apartheid was sounded when the people at the local level said “Enough is enough”, and they were ready to man the barricades. This was another example of the unstoppable People’s Power. We saw it with East Germany that culminated in the fall of the Berlin Wall; the examples of the velvet revolutions that toppled communist regimes. Most recently we have seen this phenomenon in the Ukraine when the people overturned a rigged election; or even in Togo when the people took to the streets because their constitution had been violated and, more recently, in Lebanon, leading to the promised withdrawal of Syria.

The focus of power is local

What I said about how we got our freedom, with its three tiers - international community, liberation movements and the people - is reflected in the manner in which most of us come from lands with a three tiered government structure, first national, then regional/provincial/county/shire and finally the local. National governments may have admirable policies and even budget for their implementation but if they do not get implemented at the local level then they are as good as non-existent.

For the people who matter, the electorate at the local level, it is not about eloquent disquisitions about ideological and other high faluting theses. What matters for them are mundane down to earth, bread and butter things that have to do with delivery. Are they or are they not going to get that much needed school or those desperately needed houses, or those streets to be tarred and street lighting to be installed? Will they get electricity coming to their homes so that they won’t have to use polluting coal fires, and can they now have clean water from taps and not have to fetch polluted water from the filthy stream, and will they now have waterborne sewerage to replace the foul smelling and unhygienic bucket system; will there be community libraries and recreation centres with swings and roundabouts for the children, and safe swimming pools and beautiful sports fields and arenas to replace the bumpy sand lots where they have played soccer as youngsters and now want something better for their kids? Will there be accessible clinics in the neighbourhood providing adequate primary health care and good hospitals for more sophisticated tertiary health services? And what about community security and safety? Are the police people-friendly and efficient and effective as a crime detection and prevention agency and what about the emergency services? Do the ambulances respond reasonably

“Our victory over the viciousness of apartheid is also your victory in the international community.”



expeditiously – what about employment and are the aged and those with disabilities and children and other vulnerable members of society adequately catered for?

The only sanction that the people have to punish erring politicians and public officials who perform poorly is through their vote at election time. Politicians know this quite well judging from the amount of time they spend canvassing during election time. Thus regular free and fair elections are the sine qua non of smooth working local communities and of well run regional and national governments. They make for accountable government at all three levels. The electorate needs to be vigilant and ready to pounce on any evidence of unresponsive and indifferent elected representatives. Their feet must be kept to the fire to ensure that they perform with maximum efficiency and transparency. There must be reliable and vigilant watchdogs to ferret out any incompetence, inefficiency and corruption and expose it all to shame those who are guilty assuring them that pay off time will surely come at election time when they will almost certainly be made to bite the dust. Nothing concentrates the mind quite as much as being exposed.

The electorate at all levels should punish corruption sharply. After all it is their money, their resources that are being squandered. In our fight against apartheid we discovered that nothing could replace vibrant organs of civil society – such as civic and rate payers' associations, women's and workers' organisations, special interest groups such as Detainee's Parents Support Group. The End Conscription Campaign, local branches of trade unions, ecumenical faith groups and other NGOs that in a democratic dispensation would hold elected officials to high standards. A free critical and investigative press is quite indispensable for a vibrant democracy encouraging vigorous debate and dissent, allergic to sycophancy and fear of rocking the boat. With these in place and functioning well then we could be bold to assert that democracy would be safe. The price of freedom is ceaseless vigilance for power does tend to corrupt. Elected officials should be expected to give regular report backs to be



engaged in town hall meetings where they would give an account of their stewardship.

We in Africa especially must show that we are serious about the African renaissance, about Nepad, about the African Union and the peer review system. We should act with consistency. We acted expeditiously and firmly and correctly when Togo stepped out of line. We should, if we want to retain any credibility and the respect of others, do likewise everywhere and always as, for instance, in Zimbabwe.

Human rights are universal or they are nothing. When they are violated anywhere we should say so clearly and unambiguously otherwise we are colluding with the violators and are in a sense accessories after the fact.

The African Union should be able to suspend the membership of any State that does not adhere to the Union's standards as the Commonwealth has done so admirably. Otherwise we will become a laughing stock in the world. We should be tough with Presidents and other heads of State who want to become Presidents for life and who do so by tinkering with the constitution of their land.

We, the people, must demand it for we, the people, are who ultimately matter. For is democracy not after all government of the people, by the people, for the people?

And I wish to commend to you your Aberdeen Agenda and I hope that you will be as keen to implement the principles for good local democracy in the Commonwealth. For the time for local democracy is now.

Commonwealth Local Government Conference 2007 venue announced

The next Commonwealth Local Government Conference will be in Auckland, New Zealand in 2007, hosted by a consortium led by the Ministry of Local Government, New Zealand and Local Government New Zealand.

Extending local democracy

In his closing address Len Duvall OBE AM first described the role and value of the Commonwealth. He said that in the 80s and 90s the Commonwealth showed its value in its support for liberation movements such as that in South Africa, and in the 90s extended this to look at how democracy can be extended and providing support through election monitoring, technical support and the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group.

He said that that democracy is fragile and we must continue to work to keep it and achieve democracy at the local level as well.

He thanked all the speakers and the delegates for their contributions and said that they testified to the growing collaboration between CLGF and other Commonwealth and international organisations.

In conclusion, Len Duvall said that in the next decade CLGF must build on the foundations it had set in its first decade, particularly in its work in promoting local democracy and good governance. He said that CLGF's strength was derived from its membership and that CLGF can help them develop partnerships to take forward this agenda.

Mr Duvall said that it has been a privilege to be elected chairperson of CLGF and had been an honour to serve the organisation and its members and work with the many partners over the past three years.

Vote of thanks

Cllr John Otekat, President Uganda Local Government Association

said that he was honoured to give the vote of thanks on behalf of CLGF to Archbishop Tutu. Thanking him for accepting the invitation to speak at the conference, Cllr Otekat said that it was timely that Archbishop Tutu should speak at CLGF's tenth anniversary conference as South Africa was celebrating ten years since the end of apartheid.



General Meeting Friday 18 March 2005

Aberdeen declaration and CLGF

Programme of Action

The Aberdeen Agenda: Commonwealth principles for good practice in local democracy and good governance was adopted and a CLGF Action Plan agreed.

CLGF report of activities and accounts for 2003-05

Election of members of the CLGF Board for 2005-07

Members were elected to serve on the CLGF Board for 2005-2007 and the new Board elected Cllr John Otekat as the Chairperson and Cllr Robert Montague and Hon Chris Carter as Vice Chairpersons.

Special meeting on the local government response to the Asian tsunami

Sri Lankan Secretary Mr Chandrapala further updated delegates on the effect of the tsunami on local government in the country. Delegates discussed the assistance needed and local government partnerships being set up in Sri Lanka, India and other countries affected.



Commonwealth Local Government Conference
Deepening local democracy
15-17 March 2005 Aberdeen, Scotland, UK

The Aberdeen Agenda:

Commonwealth principles for good practice in local democracy and good governance

The General Meeting of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, convened in Aberdeen, Scotland, 18 March 2005, following the Third Commonwealth Local Government Conference *'Deepening Local Democracy'* 15-17 March 2005 agreed the following statement.

Re-confirming that:

- All Commonwealth member states share core democratic values and standards and, as agreed at the 1997 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, "effective, elected local government is an important foundation for democracy" and is the system adopted by a majority of Commonwealth countries, and although there is no one single model to follow, its establishment should be encouraged.
- Our shared values, structures and experiences within the Commonwealth family provide a framework for working together in partnership and undertaking joint activities under the auspices of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF).

Recalling:

- The core values and principles of the Commonwealth as set out in the 1991 Harare Declaration and subsequent CHOGM decisions, including the 2002 High Level Review, in particular as they relate to adherence to democracy, the rule of law, good governance, freedom of expression and the protection of human rights;
- The mandates established by Commonwealth Heads of Government in respect of local government and the role of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum at their meetings in 1995, 1997, 1999, 2002 and 2003, notably in relation to the promotion of local democracy and good governance;
- The importance attached to local democracy and good governance, community empowerment and effective decentralisation as a means to reduce poverty and implement the UN Millennium Development Goals, its Specialised Agencies, notably UN Habitat, and other international development agencies, including under the ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement;
- The previous decisions of the CLGF, in particular the 2000 London Statement on Local Government Priorities for the New Millennium and the 2003 Tshwane Statement on the CLGF Work Programme.

Emphasising:

- The fundamental link between freedom, development and local democracy, as noted in the 2003

Commonwealth Expert Group on Development and Democracy and further highlighted in the CLGF report on Deepening Local Democracy prepared for the 2005 Aberdeen Conference.

Welcoming:

- Recent initiatives to accelerate the implementation of the UN Millennium Development Goals and the growing recognition of the role of democratic local government in this regard;
- The report of the Commission for Africa, Our Common Interest, and in this context seeking an early implementation of the Commission's recommendations, especially as they relate to local government.

Noting:

- The vulnerability and special development needs of small states as highlighted by the impact of recent natural disasters in the Caribbean and Asia, and the detrimental effects of climate change in the Pacific and elsewhere, and the key contribution which democratic local government can make to post-disaster reconstruction for example following the recent Asian tsunami disaster;
- The impact of HIV/AIDS on delivery of local government services.

Endorsing:

- The reports and recommendations of the 2004 Commonwealth regional symposia on local democracy and good governance, held in the Caribbean and the Pacific.

Resolving to:

- Agree, as set out below, Commonwealth Principles on Good Practice for Local Democracy and Good Governance as a set of standards which will guide government policies to promote local democracy and good governance throughout the Commonwealth;
- Recommend to all CLGF member organisations the implementation of the Commonwealth Principles and propose that CLGF's work in this area be guided by the fulfilment of these Principles;
- Propose the formal endorsement of the Commonwealth Principles to Commonwealth Heads of Government at their meeting in Malta in November 2005 as well as to other partner organisations and request their support in the provision of technical and other support to enable implementation of the Principles;
- Request the CLGF Board and Director to develop the above recommendations and secure resources for their implementation.

Commonwealth principles for good practice in local democracy and good governance

1 Constitutional and legal recognition for local democracy: *local democracy should enjoy constitutional and legal recognition.*

Local government should be recognised as a sphere of government. Legal and constitutional recognition are important to protect the fundamental principle of local democracy. Respect for this protection ensures institutional security for local democracy.

2 The ability to elect local representatives: *citizens should be able to elect their local representatives in conditions of political freedom.*

It is important for local representatives to reflect the views and needs of the community they serve. We believe that this is best achieved through regular/timely local elections which are both open and inclusive. Whatever the means or processes of local democracy, the results should reflect the wishes of the electorate.

3 Partnerships between spheres of government: *there should be cooperation and partnership among local, regional/provincial and national spheres of government.*

Effective democracy demands respect between the different spheres of government and recognises the defined roles they play in serving their citizens.

It is important to ensure that there is regular dialogue and cooperation between the different spheres. Strong intergovernmental relations will promote greater alignment of national, regional and local priorities. Significant decentralisation requires cooperation and strengthened coordination between the different spheres of government.

4 Defined legislative framework: *local democracy should ensure local government has appropriate powers in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity.*

Democratic local government, with clearly defined powers, serves as the means by which the community can shape their livelihoods.

Effective devolution enables the views of the local community to be expressed and their views taken into account in decisions implemented to improve the quality of life of all citizens locally.

5 Opportunity to participate in local decision-making: *all citizens should be able to participate actively in the local democratic process.*

Local democracy gives citizens the freedom to participate in making decisions that are locally appropriate and serve the needs of local community. Effective consultation is central to the engagement of the community in the local policy making process.

However, critical to this is a vibrant civil society and a clearly defined relationship between it and local government. It is important for local government to be proactive, and reach out to its communities to ensure that public participation is maximised. The political will to develop that relationship with its electorate must be nurtured within the local council itself.

The building of a robust relationship between local government and civil society is central to local democracy and to the development of sustainable communities.

6 Open local government – accountability: *local government should be accountable to the community it serves.*

Local government should be accountable to the community it serves while operating within the legal and policy framework of other spheres of government.

Robust, independent regulatory bodies need to be in place to safeguard against corruption, mismanagement and the inappropriate use of resources by local government, politicians, and officials.

Civil society needs to be strengthened as a counterpart in this process. Participatory budgeting is a tool for enhancing accountability which is also effective at training local civil society in holding their local councils to account.

7 Open local government – transparency: *the local decision making process should be open and transparent.*

The way local government makes decisions should be clear and clearly communicated to the community it serves. Local councils need to adopt a public information strategy using different media and reaching all of society.

8 Openness to scrutiny: The work of the executive should be subject to scrutiny.

Policy determined by the executive/local authority should be open to scrutiny by other elected members and appropriate civil society organisations/ community individuals. Effective leadership should welcome scrutiny both from within the local council and by the wider community.

This requires skilled councillors and individuals in civil society able to effectively scrutinise policy and processes intelligently and constructively.

9 Inclusiveness: the process of local decision-making must reflect the social, economic, environmental and cultural needs of the entire community.

Decisions should be taken at the level closest to the community to which they relate. Consultation is essential to ensure the needs of the whole community are met, especially with disadvantaged groups including women, youth, minority groups and people with disabilities, whose voices are often neglected.

The Commonwealth and the CLGF are committed to a target of no less than 30 per cent of women in decision-making in the political, public and private sectors, and to developing strategies for increasing their active participation.

Commitment to downward accountability is critical to citizen engagement. Participatory planning is a tool to ensure inclusive and equitable planning.

10 Adequate and equitable resource allocation: in order to respond to the needs of the local community.

Local government must have adequate financial resources to fulfil its mandate and ensure significant autonomy in resource allocation.

An independent and secure revenue base is key to sound management of resources, and included in this is the predictability and adequacy of financial transfers from central to local government in terms of timeliness and amounts. Such transfers must be free of political bias, and a local government agreement or legal framework to govern such transfers is often of critical importance.

In the distribution of resources, local government must be seen as an integral part of the overall public sector involved in delivering key public services.

11 Equitable service delivery: the distribution of services should reflect the diverse needs of the local community.

Services provided by local government should be accessible to all. The poor and marginalised, may in certain circumstances, require local government to adopt proactive policies to address their particular needs.

There is a balance to be struck between nationally set standards and locally set priorities. Local government should have the space to respond to the needs of its local area.

12 Building strong local democracy and good governance: commitment to continuous capacity development of democratic local government

Effective leadership is central to strong local democracy. It is important to strengthen and build the capacity of councillors, officers, and local governance institutions to ensure that local democracy can enable local government to deliver quality services to the local community. Community leadership is an important and growing role for local government in the creation of sustainable communities.

There is also a need to promote civic education and build the capacity of civil society organisations to enable them to engage in and participate effectively in the local democratic process.

Measuring a council's process and performance in terms of local democracy and governance based on empirical evidence, is key to informing its developmental strategies.

There is a role for councils and communities to develop international partnerships. There is a role for international local government organisations, including CLGF, in assisting its members in building stronger local democracy. CLGF should assist in building capacity through a number of means including the exchange of good practice, the dissemination of information and specific technical assistance projects.

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- HE Olusegun Obasanjo, the Chairperson-in-Office of the Commonwealth, President John Kufuor of Ghana, Rt Hon Tony Blair, MP, Prime Minister of the UK and Dr Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director of UN Habitat for their messages;
- New Zealand for agreeing to host the fourth Commonwealth Local Government Conference in Auckland 2007.

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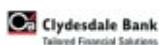


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Speeches and documentation

Commonwealth Local Government Handbook 2005 is published by Publications UK for the Commonwealth Local Government Forum. Price £50, it can be bought online via the Commonwealth Secretariat at <http://www.publications.thecommonwealth.org>.

Strengthening democracy at local level, speech by **Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu**, 17 March 2005

Welcome address, **Cllr Kate Dean**, Leader of Aberdeen City Council, 15 March 2005

CLGF: ten years promoting democratic local government, Opening address by **Len Duval OBE AM**, 15 March 2005

Scotland and the Commonwealth, Speech by **Rt Hon Jack McConnell MSP**, First Minister of Scotland, 15 March 2005

Address to the opening ceremony by **Hon Portia Simpson Miller**, Minister of Local Government, Community Development and Sport, Jamaica , 15 March 2005

The role of local government in decentralisation, speech by HE president of Ghana, delivered by **Hon Charles Bintin**, Minister for Local Government and Rural Development, 15 March 2005

Special address by **Mr Chandrapala**, Secretary, Ministry of Provincial Councils and Local government, Sri Lanka, 15 March 2005

Building blocks for local democracy: the South African experience, **Father Smangaliso Mkhatshwa**, Mayor of Tshwane and president of United Cities and Local Government, 15 March 2005

Subsidiarity local democracy and development, speech by **Koos Richelle**, Director general, EuropeAid Co-operation Office, European Commission, 15 March 2005

Speech of Justice **Abdul Razak A Thahim**, 15 March 2005

Localising MDGs and Good Urban Governance, speech by **Dr Anna Tibaijuka**, UN Under Secretary General delivered by Paul Taylor, UN Habitat, 16 March 2005

Empowering New Zealand communities for better service, speech by **Hon Chris Carter**, Minister of Local Government, New Zealand, 16 March 2005

Innovations at the City of Toronto, speech by **Cllr Sandra Bussin**, 16 March 2005

Devolved government: lessons learned, presentation by **Jon Harris**, Strategic Director, COSLA, 16 March 2005

Local government: a full partner in provincial and central government, presentation by **Dame Mavis McDonald DCB**, Permanent Secretary, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister UK, 16 March 2005

Local government: a full partner of provincial and central government – positive intergovernmental relations for local democracy, presentation by **Dr John-Mary Kauza**, Chief of Governance and Public Administration, UNDESA, 16 March 2005

Ensuring a robust electoral system at the local level, presentation by **Mayor Murchison Brown**, President, Trinidad and Tobago Local Government Association, 16 March 2005

Internal scrutiny, presentation by **Zaya Yeebo**, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 16 March 2005

Democratic deficit: innovative attempts at increasing voter turnout, presentation by **Hon Wigbert Dogoli**, President of the National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana, 16 March 2005

CLGF's activities supporting local democracy and good governance, presentation by **Hon Mayor Robert Montague**, 16 March 2005

Address given by **Hon Frank Nweke Jnr**, Minister of Local Government, Nigeria on behalf of HE president Olusegun Obasanjo GCFR, 16 March 2005

Address by Commonwealth Secretary-General **HE Rt Hon Don McKinnon**, 16 March 2005

Open local government, presentation by **Stuart Ligomeka**, Director for Local Government Services, Ministry for Local Government and Rural Development, Malawi, 16 March 2005

Open local government: accountability and transparency, presentation by **Michael Lippe**, Urban Advisor, Transparency International, 16 March 2005

Local government inclusiveness, representing the whole community: the Ugandan experience, presentation by **Raphael Magyezi**, Secretary-general, Uganda Local Government Association, 16 March 2005

Presentation by **Dr Jatin Modi**, President, All India Institute of Local Self-Government, 16 March 2005

Inclusiveness, representing the whole community, presentation by **Stuart Mole OBE**, 16 March 2005

Urban Governance Index: the Zimbabwean Experience, presentation by **Ferris P Zimunya**, Secretary-General, Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe, 16 March 2005

Modernising service delivery: local government and better services at the local level, paper presented by **Charles C Katiza**, Secretary-General, African Union of Local Authorities, 16 March 2005

Improving prospects for local e-governance in the Commonwealth, presentation by **Dr Ekwow Spio-Garbrah**, Chief Executive Officer, CTO

Real PPP for IT-enabling governance, presentation by **Puvan J Selyanathan**, Intecture, 16 March 2005

A strategy for local democracy, speech by **Rt Hon Nick Raynsford MP**, Minister for Local Government and the Regions, UK

Decentralisation and local democracy, speech by **Lewis MacDonald MSP**, 17 March 2005

A strategy for local democracy, Department of Provincial and Local Government, South Africa, speech presented by Deputy Minister for Local and Provincial Government, South Africa, 17 March 2005

Copies of the speeches are available from CLGF. Those available electronically can be found on the conference website www.clgf.org.

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