

The background of the cover is decorated with numerous thin, curved lines in a variety of colors including blue, orange, green, red, and purple. These lines sweep across the page in various directions, creating a sense of movement and energy.

A Commonwealth Working For All

The Secretary-General's Report 2021

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The Commonwealth

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Our Commonwealth

2.5

BILLION

The Commonwealth's population is 2.5 billion, of which more than 60 per cent is aged 29 or under.

1 IN 3

YOUNG PEOPLE

Worldwide, one in three young people aged between 15 and 29 live in Commonwealth countries: about 640 million out of 1.8 billion.

21%

LESS COST

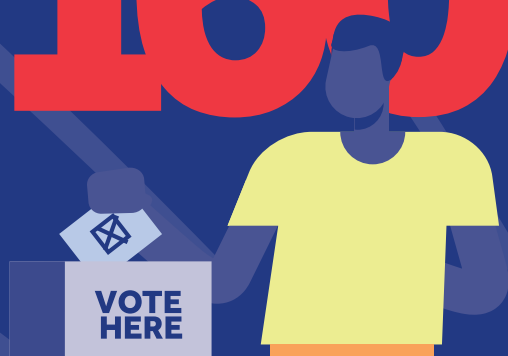
Bilateral costs for trading partners in Commonwealth countries are on average 21 per cent less than between those in non-member countries. A real Commonwealth Advantage.

7 IN THE TOP 10

HIGHEST PERFORMING

Commonwealth countries are among the highest performing in the Ibrahim Index of African Governance and make up 7 of the top 10 nations.

160



ELECTIONS

The Commonwealth has observed over 160 elections in nearly 40 countries since 1980.

US \$13



TRILLION

The combined gross domestic product of Commonwealth countries is estimated at US\$11.6 trillion in 2018 and was estimated to be US \$13trillion in 2020.

10



EMERGING CITIES

Half of the top 20 global emerging cities are in the Commonwealth: New Delhi, Mumbai, Nairobi, Kuala Lumpur, Bangalore, Johannesburg, Kolkata, Cape Town, Chennai and Dhaka.

7 IN THE TOP 10



FOR GENDER EQUALITY

In Sub-Saharan Africa, Commonwealth countries comprise 7 of the top 10 highest performing countries for gender equality.

Programme Result Highlights

1500



DIRECT BENEFICIARIES

1,500 direct beneficiaries of preventing and countering violent extremism capacity-building.

42



COUNTRIES PARTICIPATING

42 countries participating in the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda on Trade and Investment with the aim to boost intra-Commonwealth trade to US\$2 trillion by 2030.

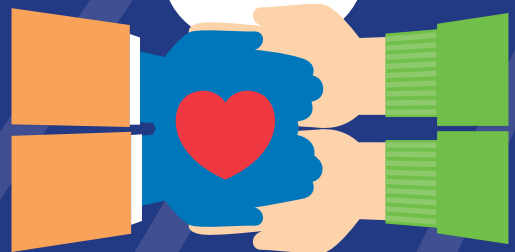
17



COUNTRIES SUPPORTED

17 countries supported through their election cycle through observation, recommendations and reform.

8



SMALL STATES SUPPORTED

8 small states supported to actively participate in international human rights mechanism



METHODOLOGY DEVELOPED

Economic Cost of Violence Against Women and Girls methodology developed and applied in Seychelles and Lesotho.

US\$
43.8



MILLION RAISED

Climate Finance Access Hub raised US\$43.8m for member countries.

47



MEMORANDA SIGNED

Partnership strategy developed, 47 memoranda of understanding signed.

1



HEADS OF GOV MEETING

One Heads of Government Meeting and 60 ministerial meetings.

Foreword by the Secretary-General



This report outlines the vital reforms we have undertaken, alongside the delivery of our mandates and our ongoing commitment to the values of the Commonwealth Charter. I hope it builds pride in how far we have come and a strong foundation for the essential conversations ahead. The challenges facing our world – though numerous, complex and grave – define our shared opportunity and responsibility: to draw from the deep wells of our unique history and face the future with clarity, unity and purpose. I continue to be driven by my unyielding belief in the Commonwealth's capacity to serve every one of our members, and their citizens rise to the challenges of our times and, through our indelible shared values, shape the world to come.

The world has fundamentally changed since I last had a chance to formally present the work and achievements of the Commonwealth Secretariat at the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London.

In that time, we have felt the full force of the global COVID-19 pandemic, seen the acceleration of the impact of global warming, alongside a global increase in social unrest and growing disquiet about the resilience of the democratic institutions which have formed the bedrock of our prosperity over the past seven decades.

The impact of these extraordinary times would have tested any organisation, causing them serious and wide-reaching challenges in delivering their mandates. Yet despite these difficulties, the staff of the Secretariat, our partners and our member countries have continued to deliver.

We work at the Commonwealth Secretariat to serve all our member countries and to deliver on the mandates set for us. This work has not lessened over the past few years and our commitment to our member countries has not wavered.

Rather, despite the challenges we have faced we have diligently continued to strive to serve all.

I am so proud of the work of the staff of the Secretariat and our colleagues across member countries and partner organisations for the way in which they have continued to deliver despite the most testing and difficult circumstances.

I know that many Secretariat staff and friends and colleagues across the Commonwealth have experienced deep loss and tough personal circumstances in this crisis. No family has escaped the impact of this most devastating time.

However, despite this awful pandemic we have continued to work for our common good. Over the past 18 months the Secretariat has held thousands of virtual meetings, including over 60 ministerial meetings. It has observed elections and supported democracy across our Commonwealth family, advocated on behalf of our members at the highest level, all while continuing to deliver the programmes and assistance that is a core part of our role.

At times of great change and challenge, especially at times of isolation, it can be difficult to connect what we do and say with what the societies we serve need and demand. Distance and seclusion can lead us to conclude that our governments are distant, our leaders indifferent and our aspirations forgotten.

The Commonwealth was born from a great period of change, birthed after the ending of the Second World War and at the beginning of the Cold War with a vision to "bring a touch of healing" to the relationships and kinships that still bind us today.

Our family was then defined over the following decades, and as our numbers increased with the independence of many of our member countries, we became united in our stand against the evil that was apartheid.

Our second period of great global change came with the defeat of apartheid in South Africa and the ending of the Cold War. The Commonwealth Secretariat again adapted to focus on empowering and supporting our member countries in the post-Cold War world.

We now stand at another pivot point in history and face yet again questions about what type of organisation we want to be.

It is my honour and privilege to serve you as your Secretary-General. From the day I took office, I have endeavoured to reform the Secretariat, enabling it to deliver more impact with less resources. This report outlines what we have achieved together.

Yet in delivering this change in a most challenging environment I am ever more aware of the question that hangs over all organisations such as ours in this post-COVID world. We have faced the challenges of the world over these past seven decades as a Commonwealth united in vision and purpose. As we stand at another period of transition for our world, we must continue to provide answers to the challenges we all face but also to continue to articulate a vision for what we want the Commonwealth to be.





The Commonwealth

At this time when multilateralism is under threat and nationalism and narrow self-interest are on the rise, the Commonwealth shines as a beacon of hope and promise, inspiring confidence in the benefits of international co-operation and collective action.

In an era of changing economic circumstances and uncertainty, new trade and economic patterns, and unprecedented threats to peace and security, the need for the Commonwealth as a compelling force for good and as an effective network for co-operation and for promoting development has never been greater.

Just over 70 years ago, as the world began to recover from a devastating war, nations of the Commonwealth agreed to move forward together as free and equal members. The vision and sense of connection that inspired the signatories of the London Declaration has stood the test of time, and the Commonwealth continues to grow, adapting to address contemporary needs. Today, many millions of people around the world are drawn together because of the collective values shared by the Commonwealth.

This year the world has been fighting a new war, and once again the values of the Commonwealth have come to the fore. This time nurses, doctors and other hospital staff are in the trenches fighting COVID-19, a disease that changed our world with astonishing speed. Economies have ground to a halt and business has buckled under the strain. Across the world many thousands of families have suffered the loss of their mother, father, child, spouse, sibling or friend from coronavirus complications, often without the comfort of someone familiar to hold their hands.

This war against an invisible enemy has blighted the lives of millions of people. It has also exposed

divisions in society between the wealthiest and the poorest; between those with access to healthcare and those left without treatment; between those with good housing and those on the street.

Countries have closed their borders and the free movement of people has been halted. Although this was a necessary and temporary measure to curb the pandemic, it risks giving strength to the 21st century shift towards nationalism and distrust of people of other races and nationalities. It has raised fears that we shall not see a return to open borders and freedom of movement, to free trade and international co-operation.

This is why, now more than ever, millions of people who believe in global co-operation to promote peace and prosperity are looking to the Commonwealth for leadership.

The Commonwealth shines as a beacon of hope and promise, inspiring confidence in the benefits of international co-operation and collective action. An understanding of how as countries, as communities and as individuals we are mutually dependent and mutually supporting lies at the heart of all that the Commonwealth brings to our world.

Our 54 nations, large and small, rich and poor, are now home to one-third of the world's population, 60 per cent of whom are under the age of thirty. We are drawn together by common values, and co-operate to promote democracy, good governance, the rule of law and human rights. We work to protect the social and economic wellbeing

of our people, especially to empower women and marginalised or vulnerable communities. We create opportunities for greater fulfilment by all, particularly our young people. Together, we take action to safeguard and regenerate the natural resources of this planet.

This is manifested in the Commonwealth Blue Charter, through which our member countries collaborate on protocols and practices to safeguard the health of the ocean which connects the continents, the islands and the countries in which we live. It is also seen in the Commonwealth Cyber Declaration, which supports economic and social development and rights online so that a free, open, inclusive and secure cyberspace can be enjoyed by all. These important affirmations of Commonwealth solidarity and co-operation are among agreements reached when the leaders of our richly diverse and geographically widespread countries came together in 2018. They are inspiring examples of how in the Commonwealth we work individually and collectively to promote economic growth and sustainable development in which all can share.

Then and now: Still growing as we celebrate 70 years of Commonwealth unity

In 2019 we celebrated the 70th anniversary of the modern Commonwealth. Events took place across the Commonwealth, from street parties to church services, from democracy debates to fashion shows as 2.4 billion people in 54 countries celebrated the history and values that bind them together.

The modern Commonwealth came into being with the London Declaration, signed on 26 April 1949. This marked the point at which the legacy of the British Empire was replaced with a partnership of equal member countries sharing a set of principles and values.

In the 70 years since this reformulation, the relevance and value of the relationship has been reaffirmed and consolidated. The creation of the Commonwealth

Secretariat in 1965 and the ever-expanding number of professional and advocacy Commonwealth organisations reflect this relevance. Membership of the Commonwealth has grown from eight countries in 1949 and now brings together 33 per cent of the world's population. In February 2020 we were delighted to welcome back the Maldives, increasing Commonwealth membership to 54.

In her message marking the 70th anniversary, Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth, said Commonwealth citizens can "look to the future with greater confidence and optimism as a result of the links that we share." She added: "With enduring commitment through times of great change, successive generations have demonstrated that whilst the goodwill for which the Commonwealth is renowned may be intangible, its impact is very real."

A multi-faith service took place at Westminster Abbey, led by the Queen with the Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Rt Hon Patricia Scotland, QC. At the event Secretary-General Scotland said: "In celebrating 70 years of the Commonwealth we recall with pride and satisfaction the impressive record of impact and achievement which have brought sustainable development to the people of our diverse family of nations, with ever more inclusive progress and prosperity.

"As rising generations respond afresh and build together in the renowned Commonwealth spirit of goodwill, we can be assured that through the next 70 years and beyond this great family will rise to even greater levels of mutual support, conscious as always that independence and interdependence go hand in hand for the people and nations of a connected Commonwealth."

Commonwealth Day has been celebrated across the Commonwealth every year since the 1970s. In recent years, there has been a shift away from celebrating a single day towards celebrating a full week, with Commonwealth Day at its focus and first day. The aim is to celebrate the unity, diversity and links of the modern Commonwealth and to foster greater understanding of the Commonwealth's achievements and role.







The Challenge

The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland, QC was appointed Secretary-General at the 2015 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Malta and took office on 1 April 2016.

Her vision was to rejuvenate and reshape the organisation to ensure it served member countries more efficiently, effectively and economically, ensuring a sustainable future. Leaders expressed support for the Secretary-General's endeavours, which served to make the Commonwealth more responsive and relevant to its members.

The meeting in Malta ended on a positive note. But behind the scenes the Secretariat was in a precarious financial position, with outdated financial management and deepening pensions deficit. It was struggling to serve its members and with questions being asked about its relevance in a modern world.

The Secretariat's expected income for 2016/17, against which the organisation had budgeted, was £36.2 million. Only 57 per cent had been received by the end of December 2016. This forced an urgent reassessment of financial commitments across all programmes. A number of projects were postponed or cancelled which came as a blow to communities across the Commonwealth who needed support and technical assistance.

This situation continued to be difficult in the following years. There was a further decline in core funding to £32.3 million in the 2018/19 financial year. This represented a significant reduction from £51.9 million in 2012/13. The impact was particularly severe in the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC), which is reliant on voluntary contributions from member countries.



The financial situation inherited by Secretary-General Scotland should be seen in the context of the global economy at the time. Even as the global economy was recovering from the financial crisis of a decade earlier, member countries continued to experience an unprecedented downturn in global trade. Inevitably, their economic uncertainties had an impact on the Secretariat, which relies on contributions from members, including voluntary contributions.

Although the financial position of the Secretariat was a serious cause for concern, Secretary-

General Scotland assumed her role with a determination to address structural issues affecting the best delivery of support and programmes to Commonwealth members. Many of the problems raised by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DfID) in a critical report in 2011 continued to affect the organisation.

DfID concluded that the Secretariat was not yet fulfilling its potential to be a significant positive force in international co-operation and development. There was a lack of organisational



capacity, agility and interoperability, it said. It was stuck in silos and hierarchy.

Shortcomings identified by DfID were evident in environmental issues and climate change, where it could be playing a high-profile diplomatic and advocacy role, particularly on behalf of small island states who are disproportionately affected. The Secretariat's internal environmental policy framework was described as "limited".

The DfID 2011 report also highlighted a failure to understand the dynamic of the digital century. This

meant the digital divide between the wealthiest and poorest Commonwealth nations was growing, and the potential to leverage technology for the benefit of people of the Commonwealth was being missed.

The Commonwealth Secretariat embarked upon a period of reform and revitalisation in April 2016. It started with a systematic process of reform. A series of affirmative and evidence-based actions have resulted in radical changes, tangible improvements and critical enhancements since then. This has helped raise the organisational profile and visibility as well as the impact of its work.







Delivering Reform



The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland, QC was appointed Secretary-General with a mandate to reform and modernise the Secretariat. The work achieved has enabled the organisation to pivot to react to support member countries through the recent COVID-19 crisis and focus on the long term issues we all face.

Throughout her first term Secretary-General Scotland has put the Secretariat and the Commonwealth at the heart of global debate on the pressing issues member countries face. In areas as diverse as the environment and climate change, international trade, the empowerment of women, digital connectivity and the vulnerability of small states the Secretariat has been at the forefront of both the policy debate on these issues and in delivering for member countries.

In the period since 2018 the Commonwealth Secretariat has continued to significantly improve the delivery of programmes and support to members of the Commonwealth, increasing the value and benefit countries and their peoples receive through their relationship with the Commonwealth.

These commitments have been met while substantial reform has been undertaken to put the Secretariat on a sound and sustainable financial footing, enabling it to deliver more effectively while staying within the fiscal limits set by contributing members.

The aim of this programme of reform has been to create an efficient, cost-effective and dynamic Secretariat, an organisation that was better able to deliver its Strategic Plan in line with the Commonwealth Charter and the mandates set for the Secretariat by Leaders at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in 2018.

The key objectives were:

- to ensure the Secretariat best meets the collective aims of member countries and can demonstrate that it does so. This required a focus on areas where the Secretariat can add value by virtue of its comparative advantage
- to mould the organisation into an effective and efficient mechanism for delivering, measuring and reporting against the objectives in the Strategic Plan in line with the Commonwealth Charter, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting mandates and SDGs.

The vision that drove this reform has always been clear with the Secretary-General telling staff: "Together we have an obligation to create a centre of excellence here at the Secretariat that can support the important work we are undertaking across the Commonwealth for the benefit of more than two billion citizens whom we serve."

The initial reform has been delivered through an outcomes-based Strategic Plan running from 2017/18 to 2020/21. The plan provided direction and aligned the Secretariat's medium-term objectives with the Charter of the Commonwealth as well as the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This work will continue as the Secretariat develops and delivers future Strategic Plans in consultation with member countries.

To enable monitoring and scrutiny of this reform the Secretariat developed an annual Delivery Plan with well-defined short-term targets and indicators of success. It also included guidelines for delivering, measuring, and reporting outcomes to improve transparency.

Gender parity in staff has been achieved; the Secretariat now has 53 per cent female and 47 per cent male staff.

Reforms have made the Secretariat more transparent, collaborative and visible. The introduction of new IT systems and processes has made it possible to publish project data on the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) website. All CFTC spending above £500 is published on the Secretariat website, as are the annual results, audit, evaluation reports and management responses.

The Secretary-General has engaged constructively with the over 80 accredited Commonwealth organisations, participating in high level meetings, and delivering together with the Secretariat colleagues. Once again, the Commonwealth is fully engaged with and highly regarded by the principal international organisations such as the United Nations.

A total of 47 Memoranda of Understanding with member countries, Commonwealth associations, regional and international mechanisms and private sector and philanthropic organisations in the last three years. These partnerships are working for the Secretariat to help it to deliver results. For example they include partnerships with organisations such as the UN where the Secretariat is training UN leaders on systemic approaches to Sustainable Development, and is working towards becoming the preferred delivery partner of the UN system in Commonwealth countries.



Commonwealth heads of government have highlighted the role of ICT, science and technology in supporting good governance, inclusion and sustainable development, while reducing the digital divide. The Secretary-General has placed ICT, innovation and partnerships at the heart of the Commonwealth's reform agenda.

This work saw the creation of a digital platform to help better utilise innovation within the Commonwealth. Launched at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 2018, the Commonwealth Innovation Fund's mission is to support entrepreneurs and innovators in emerging nations of the Commonwealth Family, with a bold vision to transform the lives of those living on less than US\$5 per day in developing countries of the Commonwealth through innovation.

The Commonwealth Innovation Fund is enabling innovators in Commonwealth countries to access early-stage funding not available through traditional channels.

Despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, ICT and innovation will remain one of five main themes at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting that is intended to be held in 2022 in Kigali, Rwanda.

The UK's Department for International Development (DfID), previously critical of the Secretariat, has given one of its highest ratings to our work. DfID awarded an A+ rating in respect of its financial contributions to the Secretariat, including the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Collaboration and the Commonwealth Youth Programme, the Commonwealth of Learning and the Commonwealth Foundation.

DfID said: "The Secretariat has risen to this challenge and met all of the performance criteria for the release of the first 3 tranches of our support to the CFTC and have delivered some important changes, including the publication of their data in accordance with the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) standards and the development of a new more focused Strategic Plan, while taking forward delivery of their internal reform plan.

"In addition to the excellent progress being made by the Secretariat both the Commonwealth Foundation and Commonwealth of Learning have continued to demonstrate that impact can be delivered with limited resources and that the focus on strategic planning with high quality results-based management and SMART objectives pays dividends. Both continue to deliver extremely well-regarded programmes."

The difficult and yet rewarding journey of reform initiated by the Secretary-General has made a visible impact and reinforces the success of the Commonwealth and what it has achieved together.

This essential work could not have come soon enough with the global impact from early 2020 of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Secretariat, after a difficult but necessary process of reform found itself, alongside the whole world, having to react quickly and with vigour to the new challenges and impacts of the pandemic.

An organisation made up of talented and motivated people from across the Commonwealth's 54



member countries would always have shown resilience and dedication in such a situation. But the radical changes made to the structures and systems of the Secretariat through the reform process of the preceding years enabled it to respond to the crisis in ways that would have been impossible just a few years previously.

From the start of the crisis the Secretariat and its staff have worked tirelessly on behalf of member countries.

Since lockdown came into force in our host country the UK in early 2020, the organisation pivoted to operating remotely and in a virtual environment. Since then the Secretariat has held over 60 ministerial meetings, around 50 high level meetings, over 1,800 external meetings or events while also holding over 7,000 internal meetings to support our ongoing work

This activity has been mirrored by action. The Secretariat established the Commonwealth Covid-19 Response Centre to provide vital information and resources for member countries to inform their response.

The Response Centre includes a data dashboard that provides up to date data on Covid-19 across all member countries helping them to track and understand the impact of Covid-19 within the Commonwealth.

Practically the Secretariat also worked quickly to establish the Commonwealth Information and

Price-Sharing Database which enables member countries to share information, collaborate to increase equitable access to essential quality medicines, health commodities and pharmaceutical procurement data. It also works to assist member countries with informed decision-making when sourcing essential medicines, vaccines and health equipment and technologies.

The Secretary-General has also committed to working and advocating for member countries, in particular around access to vaccines, to protect member states citizens against Covid-19.

This comes after the Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting in May 2021, where member countries expressed that they were "concerned by the varying inequalities in the availability, access and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines among Commonwealth Countries, particularly in some LMIC, LIC and small island states."

In response to this the Secretary-General has met with leaders from around the world, including from the WHO and WTO to advocate for quicker and more comprehensive access to vaccines for member states, particularly small states who face exceptional challenges as a result of the impact of the pandemic.

This led to the Secretary-General calling on the G20 to urgently start work now to protect the 42 smallest and most vulnerable states of the world, 32 of which are members of the Commonwealth.







Innovation and Partnerships

Innovation is at the heart of the Commonwealth reform agenda. New technologies offer ways to address some of the critical challenges that the Secretariat and member countries face in meeting their objectives.

The Innovation and Partnerships Project harnesses advances in technology to help alleviate some of the bottlenecks that hamper the effectiveness of the Secretariat, member governments and other key stakeholders.

This is being done through the digital delivery of knowledge, information, data and tool kits via the new Commonwealth Innovation Hub. The Innovation Hub has been created to enable sharing and to amplify the innovation wealth of the Commonwealth.

The Innovation Hub has five facets. The 'display' space showcases ideas and innovation stories from across the Commonwealth. The 'data' portal is a repository of Commonwealth information and knowledge resources and includes thousands of publications. The 'delivery' space is where anyone can download, read and use the knowledge products and toolkits created by the Secretariat. And the 'discovery' space is an innovation lab for incubating new ideas and accelerating innovations with maximum social impact.

The fifth facet is 'partnerships'. The project is developing partnerships between the Secretariat, member governments, Commonwealth organisations and other groups at the international, regional and national levels to foster technological innovation. A key pillar of this project will be the activation and operationalisation of the recently finalised Partnerships Strategy for the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The innovation agenda is also being supported through the new Commonwealth Innovation Fund and with technical assistance to member governments to help them become more innovative in their operations and service delivery. The new Commonwealth Secretary-General's Awards were established to celebrate the exceptional talents of young innovators across the Commonwealth.

There are a number of other ICT initiatives, including:

- **Commonwealth Meridian:** This software helps countries manage public debt. It has been helping more than 100 agencies and ministries in 60 countries. In 2020, US\$27.1 trillion of general government debt was being managed through the system.
- **Trade Connectivity Dashboard:** A web-based tool that maps trade links and potential connections between Commonwealth countries as well as regional trade hubs, with the aim of boosting intra-Commonwealth trade to US\$2 trillion by 2030.
- **Commonwealth Data Platform:** This platform compiles open source data on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for all Commonwealth countries. Users can explore a country's progress on any of the SDG indicators, while highlighting data gaps.
- **Knowledge Centre:** A one-stop source of Commonwealth information, including a

research repository, online archives of historical publications, online bookshop, and image library.

- **Disaster Risk Finance Portal:** An online portal to assist member countries in finding the right type of financial support to prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters. It serves as a “one-stop-shop” where information on international funding earmarked for catastrophes is compiled, streamlined and made easy to navigate.

The Commonwealth is engaging with a range of partners to promote innovation in member countries, including the GSMA, Nekton

Foundation, International Trade Centre and the Global Innovation Technology Alliance.

The Connected Commonwealth Space was launched in partnership with Bloomberg Philanthropies. This state-of-the-art meeting room has a Bloomberg Terminal, which brings together real-time data on every market, breaking news, in-depth research, and powerful analytics, to help countries better understand what's next for their economies. Virtual conferencing technology will also make it easier and more efficient for stakeholders to connect and work together.

Secretariat's Human Rights Unit

1

Supporting member countries' effective engagement with key international human rights mechanisms

During the last three years, 16 Commonwealth member countries, including 14 Commonwealth Small States, benefited from the Secretariat's direct technical assistance to support their effective engagement with key international human rights mechanisms, including the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) and its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism, and human rights treaty monitoring bodies. These member countries include The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Fiji, The Gambia, Guyana, Kiribati, Malawi, Nauru, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. Several member countries also benefitted from the Secretariat's in-country delivery of technical assistance, including in Dominica, The Gambia, Kiribati and Malawi.

The Geneva-based Commonwealth Small States Office (CSSO) and its two resident human rights advisers continue to support both resident and non-resident member countries, in particular small states, with human rights technical assistance as well as logistical support. The UK government currently provides funds to maintain the services of these two advisers.

The Secretariat's technical assistance and logistical support have contributed to an increased voice and visibility of Commonwealth small states in the work of the Council and its

mechanisms. The last three years also saw the strengthening of Commonwealth member countries' collaboration in the work of the HRC through the formation of an informal information-sharing Commonwealth Group in Geneva, assisted by the Secretariat.

These developments have contributed to the Commonwealth's increased visibility, which, for example, led to the delivery of a Commonwealth Joint Statement for the first time in HRC history in October 2020. At the same time, the Secretary-General continued the practice of addressing the annual HRC High-Level Segment, showcasing the Commonwealth's human rights priorities while also ensuring the organisation's visibility at the highest level. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights continued to be one of the Secretariat's key strategic partners in delivering technical assistance to Commonwealth member countries.

2

Supporting member countries to establish or strengthen effective national human rights institutions and frameworks

Since 2018, the Secretariat has provided technical assistance to Belize and Grenada to establish Paris Principles compliant national human rights institutions. They received technical assistance to undertake institutional needs assessments, in addition to the Secretariat's in-country delivery of technical assistance, targeting government officials

Commonwealth Trade Competitiveness Programme

Well before the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic fundamental changes had been taking place in the global trade landscape, and the Commonwealth, with its diverse membership, has been adapting to and coming to terms with these changes. The pandemic has halted some areas of change even as it has accelerated transformation in others, while also creating new challenges. As we seek to rebuild from the far-reaching impact of the pandemic, and if we are to build back better and stronger, one area of potential

in which Commonwealth countries can excel is in leveraging existing trade relationships and advantages to underpin growth and prosperity.

The economies of more than half of Commonwealth members are heavily dependent on commodities, such as metals, minerals and agriculture, and as demonstrated brutally by the pandemic this exposes them to volatile markets and prices.

The Secretariat provides technical assistance to member countries to help improve their trade competitiveness in global markets. Recognising

and other stakeholders. Further technical assistance has been delayed due to COVID-19.

The Eswatini Commission on Human Rights and Public Administration received technical assistance to revise its enabling legislation to be Paris Principles compliant. With the Secretariat's financial and technical assistance, the Ombudsman of Samoa conducted a public inquiry into family violence, which was launched in September 2018.

The Ombudsman of Namibia, with technical and financial support from the Secretariat, convened two national dialogues on sexual and reproductive health and equality and non-discrimination. Tonga received the Secretariat's technical assistance in developing a sexual harassment policy for the Tonga Public Service. Dominica and The Gambia received in-country technical assistance to further strengthen their National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up (NMIRF).

As part of the Secretariat's work to strengthen the capacity of parliamentarians in human rights promotion and protection, a working session for the Commonwealth Pacific Parliamentary Human Rights Group was held in April 2019 in Nuku'alofa, Tonga. The Secretariat, in partnership with the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, delivered two workshops on "Engaging parliaments on the promotion of human rights including on the work of the Human Rights Council and its Universal Periodic Review (UPR)" for the Commonwealth Asia-Pacific and Caribbean regions in 2020.

3 Promoting advocacy and awareness-raising

The Secretariat continued to engage in promoting advocacy and awareness-raising on several thematic human rights issues for member countries and other stakeholders. Thematic areas included the role of parliamentarians; civil society space; child, early and forced marriage; COVID-19 and access to girls' education; equality and non-discrimination; freedom of expression and opinion; media freedom; sports and human rights; violence against women; and effective cooperation with Treaty Bodies and Treaty Body reforms etc.

Advocacy on these thematic areas was carried out by delivering panel discussions, seminars and webinars, and participating in global and regional advocacy events. For example, in 2020 and 2021, webinars for Commonwealth Caribbean and Pacific regions were held on ratification and implementation of the UNCAT for senior government officials.

In carrying out advocacy, the Secretariat continued to collaborate with several key partners, including the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Universal Rights Group (URG), Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), and Convention Against Torture Initiative (CTI) etc.



the limited size of the domestic market in many member countries, we focus primarily on export development, with interventions targeted at improving domestic capacity, market access, exports of services and trade facilitation. The Small States Trade Finance Facility is helping small countries import goods at competitive prices to enhance their trade flows.

Since 2016, the project has provided support to 18 Commonwealth countries and four regional organisations. Formal requests have also been received from India, Jamaica, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa for an analysis of opportunities and challenges after Brexit. The Secretariat has also been working with the Government of Seychelles on port development study modules and a comprehensive review of tariffs.

The Trade Competitiveness Section has developed a unique methodology to identify new products and new markets for export diversification. While other organisations recommend export diversification to the countries, the Commonwealth Secretariat has unique expertise in providing technical support

on how to diversify exports. The Secretariat's image as an honest broker encourages many countries to approach us for technical assistance in their trade negotiations.

In 2021, in light of the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic caused an unprecedented global economic crisis which significantly affected Commonwealth countries' global and intra-Commonwealth trade and investment, the biennial edition of the *Commonwealth Trade Review* was published. It presented new empirical findings on the impact of the pandemic and outlined practical recommendations to boost trade recovery and build resilience, especially by harnessing digital trade and digital technologies, utilising post-Brexit trading opportunities and promoting more sustainable green and blue economies.

Learning for Life

The Commonwealth has developed a new education programme to strengthen learning systems in member countries. With the adverse global impact



of the COVID-19 pandemic on participation rates in education, especially for girls, this work is even more vital than before the pandemic. Learning for Life was created by the Secretariat to help improve access to education across the Commonwealth, increasing the number of teachers and educational managers and empowering children and young people through education. The programme also seeks to harness new technologies to benefit disadvantaged groups and innovate through partnerships and collaborations.

The programme harmonises the Commonwealth's interventions in education and learning and complements existing global and regional strategies.

Notable developments include the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Secretariat and the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management to develop a Commonwealth school leadership and management framework and modules. The Commonwealth's Education Partnership (CEP) between Commonwealth of Learning (COL), the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU)

and other partners has been strengthened towards a 'one Commonwealth' education approach to support implementation at country level.

The United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI) Global Advisory Committee (GAC) highlighted the contributions made by its members, including the Commonwealth Secretariat, to put girls' education and gender equality on the global agenda in 2018, and reaffirmed that the strength of the partnership derives from the diversity, global reach, and collective efforts of its members. Meanwhile, Faith in the Commonwealth, the Global Citizenship education project, was introduced in four countries: Cameroon, Kenya, Trinidad and Tobago and Uganda.

Although comparable global data is not yet available, it is inevitable that the COVID-19 pandemic will have set back participation rates and attainment in education globally. This impact is likely to be particularly acute in developing countries and amongst poorer communities. If we are to live up to our promises to the next generation, we must all redouble our efforts to provide avenues into and support for education, especially for girls.

Climate Finance Access Hub

Climate change is having an impact across the Commonwealth, forcing communities to make changes to the way they live and work. In many Commonwealth member countries, sea levels are rising, storms are increasing in both intensity and frequency, and arable land is turning into desert. Global warming is crippling economies and hampering progress toward the sustainable development goals.

The Commonwealth Climate Change Programme, through its flagship initiative the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub (CCFAH) helps countries overcome the red tape around climate financing and make successful applications to international funds that address climate change.

Commonwealth National Climate Finance Advisers are embedded in government environmental departments and agencies to provide long term assistance supporting the development of project proposals to meet application requirements for relevant climate finance funds as well as strengthening climate change policy and frameworks for enhancing access and mobilisation of climate finance to the beneficiary countries.

For example, assistance was given to Jamaica in its successful application for US\$600,000 from the UN's Green Climate Fund by drafting a proposal on REDD+ readiness actions to tackle deforestation.

In 2017, Eastern Caribbean States were hit by two Category 5 storms, with Hurricane Irma said to be the most powerful hurricane recorded in the Atlantic Ocean. These hurricanes had a catastrophic impact. In Antigua and Barbuda alone, it is estimated that they caused US\$130million of damage and US\$18million in economic loss. Experts believe that US\$70 million will be needed to repair and replace housing.

Responding to the emergency, the Commonwealth Secretariat supported Antigua and Barbuda to unlock a grant of US\$20 million from the Green Climate Fund. The project will provide assistance to Antigua and Barbuda and two other Commonwealth countries, Dominica and Grenada.

The Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub (CCFAH) as part of continued expansion efforts and scaling up of support to member countries, is working to commence the deployment of Regional Commonwealth Climate Advisers across the Indo-Pacific, Africa, and Caribbean region. These will be working alongside the International Solar Alliance (ISA), African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), respectively. Part of their remit will include technical leadership and support on regional and national climate finance issues.

The CCFAH to date supports 15 member countries in Africa, Caribbean and Pacific regions. Since its inception, as of June 2021, 31 projects in six countries, totalling US\$43.8 million have been mobilised through support from CCFAH (3 Mitigation, 13 Adaptation, 15 Cross-cutting), with a further US\$762 million worth of projects in the pipeline. In terms of capacity building, 56 training actions have been initiated through CCFAH, with 1,297 government and relevant officials trained in member countries.

Support from the India-UN Development Partnership Fund

The India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund was set up in 2017 and seeks to support sustainable development projects led by developing countries in the Global South.

In addition to a multi-year contribution of US\$100 million from the Government of India, a further US\$50 million has been earmarked within the fund as a "Commonwealth window" for developing member countries, particularly Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries within the Commonwealth.

From that window, support has already been provided for Commonwealth countries such as Barbados and The Bahamas. The outcomes to date include the Public Debt Management Act 2021 being passed by the Government of The Bahamas.







Good Offices and Democracy

Reinforcing trust in democracy and government

The Secretariat gives priority to projects that reinforce the Commonwealth's political values and principles. They encompass the work of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, Good Offices for Peace, elections, and countering violent extremism. Despite the impact of the pandemic the Secretariat has continued in its work to strengthen electoral processes, encouraging more women to take part in politics, and address the threat of violent extremism.

The Secretariat has facilitated observation of ten electoral events, in accordance with guidelines adopted at CHOGM in 2018. These took place in The Bahamas, Bangladesh, Belize, Cameroon, Ghana, Malawi, Maldives, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Saint Lucia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Dedicated technical assistance with regard to electoral

reform was provided to St Vincent and the Grenadines and The Gambia. In Malawi, before the last election, the Secretariat developed special programmes to increase women's participation in politics e.g. training women in campaigning skills in Malawi where the number of seats held by women increased from 16 per cent to 23 per cent. (see box below about Malawi).

The Secretariat has been supporting positive change to electoral process in several member countries over recent years, and this collaboration continues to bear fruit, with general elections completed in the Solomon Islands, for example.

The Commonwealth has deployed observer groups to the Solomon Islands since 2001, when the country was going through a period of civil unrest. The Solomon Islands Election Commission has been consistently responsive to Commonwealth Observers' recommendations. A process of electoral reform has taken place,

Zambia

A Commonwealth Observers' Group was sent to Zambia to cover its recent election which resulted in a landslide victory for Hakainde Hichilema. In 2016, the Secretary-General had helped secure Mr Hichilema's release from prison and acted as mediator with the former government.

It was feared Zambia's staunch political rivalry could spill over into violence, but the government and its challengers had committed to a peaceful process, signing a pledge brokered by the Commonwealth Secretariat. The Commonwealth Observer Group was led by former Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete.

President Hichilema stated after the election: "The Commonwealth didn't give up. They came back before this election and found conditions had not improved from the time they left in around 2017/18 ... but they continued trying to help to build a peace platform that will allow for free and fair election, a credible election. Voting day, there's no violence by and large. The outcome is clear, a landslide for us."

Diplomacy and dialogue have allowed Zambia to put the past behind and discover a new future - one in which the Commonwealth will continue to offer its help and support.

culminating in a new Electoral Act. Many recommendations were adopted, including an increase in financial penalties for corrupt practices and changes to polling procedures. Training was provided to journalists to increase public confidence in the accuracy and integrity of the media's coverage of future elections.

“ The Solomon Islands Electoral Commission has benefited immensely from Commonwealth observer reports from previous elections. The SIEC has extensively used the observations and recommendations in those reports in forming its policy position on certain aspects of the country's election process.

H.E. Hon Patteson Oti, Chair of the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission

The Solomon Islands Electoral Commission has shared its experience and expertise with other Commonwealth member countries through a number of Secretariat projects. This includes a contribution to the development of a Commonwealth Good Practice Guide on election cybersecurity during a regional training session. The Commission shared learnings from the introduction of biometrics into the voter registration process and discussed the guidance required by small states to secure their elections against cyber threats.

The Commonwealth Election Professionals Initiative made significant progress in supporting career progression of staff members of Commonwealth Election Management Bodies. Capacity-building has been delivered in the Pacific, Caribbean and Africa regions in the last two years. There is strong evidence of impact at both individual and institutional level, with knowledge and good practice being transferred from individuals to institutions.

Enhancing women's political participation in Malawi

Catherine Gotani Hara made history in 2019 by becoming the first female Speaker of Malawi. It was a significant milestone for women's participation in politics, not just in Malawi but in Africa.

Ms Gotani Hara has a wealth of experience, having served as a member of Parliament from 2009 to 2014. She also served in the government as Minister of Health, Minister of Environment, Deputy Minister of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, and Deputy Minister of Transport and Public Works.

Her appointment as Speaker reflects efforts to bring more women into politics in Malawi. The country is a signatory to the South African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development and the African Union Protocol on Women's Rights in Africa, both of which advance the need for increasing female participation in politics. The SADC protocol sets a specific representation target of 50 per cent women in politics and decision-making positions.

Female political representation in Malawi remains low, despite having robust legal and policy frameworks to promote gender equality. The country's 50:50 Campaign Management Agency, under the auspices of the Ministry of Gender, is leading efforts to achieve the SADC target.

In preparation for elections for Malawi, the Commonwealth partnered with Malawi's Ministry of Gender, the 50:50 Campaign Management Agency, the National Initiative for Civic Education, the Centre for Multi-Party Democracy and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) among others to prepare female candidates for campaigning. Female candidates across political parties were supported with skills on political leadership, campaigning and constituency outreach skills. The Secretariat also supported district and constituency-based training and outreach, which mobilised support for female candidates.

Good Offices in Samoa

Revised guidelines for the conduct of election observation - adopted at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 2018 - stressed the importance of the Secretary-General's 'Good Offices' role, to endeavour to find peaceful solutions to political deadlock.

It's not only Zambia where the Commonwealth Secretary-General and official played a pivotal role - but elsewhere in Africa and in the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific too. The Commonwealth played a pivotal role in brokering peace between the government and opposition in a number of countries, including Samoa, to ensure credible elections.

The Secretary-General followed developments in Samoa during elections earlier this year and spoke with all political parties. A constitutional crisis complicated and delayed the outcome of the election. However, in July, the Court of Appeal ruled on the election and recognised Samoa's first female prime minister, Fiame Naomi Mata'afa.

Lessons learned in democracy

The Secretariat is committed to strengthening monitoring, evaluation and learning strategies for election support work. Post-election follow-up work with key stakeholders has become a priority to ensure sustainability. It is critical to build flexibility into programmes in the face of shifting circumstances (such as the postponement of the referendum and election in Belize and Nigeria, respectively). The Secretariat has also learned about the strategic importance of early engagement with Election Management Bodies.

In the Secretariat's efforts to strengthen women's political participation and foster inclusive dialogue it will continue to engage with countries and help to build capacity.

During this reporting period, the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Unit's monitoring evaluation and learning work has highlighted the need to focus on building trust and co-operation between governments and civil society organisations. Although the vast majority of stakeholders recognise that neither government nor civil society can counter violent extremism on their own, there remain real barriers to co-operation, including security protocols and trust. The Secretariat is committed to building on this work and supporting member countries in their continued efforts on CVE.

Small States Office

Small states make up a majority of Commonwealth member countries, and the Commonwealth has

long positioned itself as a champion of small and vulnerable countries. The Secretariat believes they have a bigger role to play and is committed to ensuring that their voice is heard.

What holds small states back is often a lack of capacity. The Commonwealth Small States Office, established in 2011, provides space and other services, including training, to diplomatic missions of small states and regional organisations. Based in Geneva and New York, the Small States Office supports smaller countries to participate in discussions and decision-making processes on the global stage.

This partnership played an important role in enabling St Vincent and the Grenadines to run a successful campaign in New York to be elected as non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council in July 2019. In Geneva, services provided by the Small States Office enabled Malawi to become the co-ordinator of the ACP Group of African, Caribbean and Pacific Nations.

Dominica is one example of a small state, with no permanent mission in Geneva, benefitting from

“ I will take the opportunity to particularly thank the staff from the Commonwealth for working closely with us these last few days and for making the small states office available to us here in Geneva.

The Hon Francine Baron, Dominica's Minister of Foreign Affairs

a support base through the Small States Office and through the Secretariat's technical human rights expertise, which leads to more effective engagement with international human rights mechanisms and a stronger voice for small states in Geneva.

These achievements demonstrate how it is possible for small states to participate in international decision-making at the highest level thanks to the support provided by the Secretariat through the Small States Office.

Anti-corruption initiatives

The Secretariat continued to build the capacity of the 18 anti-corruption agencies in Commonwealth Africa, working with the Commonwealth Africa Anti-Corruption Centre. A survey of agencies supported by the Centre shows that 80 per cent of trainees feel courses have expanded their knowledge and 70 per cent feel better able to perform in their roles as a result of the learning. Changes reported included in the adoption of financial investigations, development of strategic plans and amendments to anti-corruption legislation.

There has been progress in improving transparency in public procurement, including the implementation of audit recommendations. Member countries who took part in the Secretariat's capacity-building initiatives reported that at least 50 per cent of public procurement bids had been published and more than half of audit recommendations were implemented.

In the area of strengthening public financial management, the Secretariat enabled member countries to enhance transparency in public procurement and implementation of audit recommendations, with member countries participating in capacity-building reporting that since the support was provided at least 50 per cent of public procurement bids had been advertised and contract awards published, and more than half of audit recommendations were implemented.

Botswana, The Gambia, Ghana and Jamaica took steps to achieve national strategic objectives and sustainable development through enhanced risk management and improved decision-making with Secretariat support.

Countering violent extremism

The Countering Violent Extremism Unit was set up in 2017 to support national strategies to tackle violent extremism through the rule of law. The unit supports peaceful approaches to addressing the causes of violent extremism in at-risk communities.

This work includes the establishment of a Cadre of Experts to work with member countries to understand the root causes of extremism and to identify a response. The Cadre works with countries such as Tanzania, where it has contributed to the reform of the police training curriculum, or in the development and dissemination of research on gender and countering violent extremism.

The Secretariat fosters closer co-operation between civil society, and particularly youth organisations, and member governments. In Cameroon, the Secretariat has supported the adoption of the Yaoundé Declaration on the Role of Youth and Women in Countering Violent Extremism, the basis for future civil society and government co-operation. Another significant development in this area is the establishment of Haki na Usalama Forum in Tanzania, a coalition of stakeholders and the police on violent extremism to foster greater community advocacy on community policing and prevention. Scoping work and engagement with governments is underway in Ghana, Jamaica, Mozambique and Sri Lanka to further develop the programme and replicate learning.

Work continues with women's organisations, such as the International Civil Society Action Network for Women's Rights, Peace and Security, which is helping to understand more about the role of women in violent extremism.

Activities have included training in Trinidad and Tobago, including a workshop on countering the narratives that terrorist and extremist organisations use to recruit women. In Cameroon, the Secretariat engaged with civil society and government officials to understand the factors that drive women to violent extremism. In Guyana and Jamaica, the Unit has supported workshop sessions that explore gender paradigms and their relationship to gang and extremist violence. Supported by the Secretariat, the Tanzanian Police Force Training College is taking steps to encourage more women to take part in their courses and to put themselves forward for college instructor and leadership positions.







Delivering Change



Commonwealth Cyber Declaration is transforming criminal justice reform

In 2018 Commonwealth countries agreed to work closely to strengthen cybersecurity across the organisation. The Commonwealth Cyber Declaration was hailed as the world's largest and most geographically diverse inter-governmental commitment on cybersecurity co-operation. It followed an announcement by the UK Government to pledge up to £15 million to help Commonwealth countries strengthen their cybersecurity capabilities and tackle criminal groups and hostile state actors who pose a global threat to security.

With electronic evidence used in around 85 per cent of criminal investigations, the Secretariat is leading on the use of digital technology to transform criminal justice. It has started work towards implementing the Cyber Declaration, including building capacity on electronic evidence handling for judges, prosecutors and investigators in the Caribbean region, and strengthening international co-operation in cybercrime investigations in countries where legal reform and capacity building is required across all Commonwealth regions. In almost two thirds of the investigations where electronic evidence is relevant, a request to special prosecutors based in another jurisdiction is needed, resulting in the need for cohesive cross-border action against cybercrime.

This work is delivered in partnership with CARICOM IMPACS, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Council of Europe and the Organisation of American States.

Collaboration between organisations has helped to deliver electronic evidence training and legislative reform across the Commonwealth. At an electronic evidence focal point meeting in Sydney participants learned how to make requests

for the preservation of electronic evidence, best practice regarding information exchange with foreign counterparts and how to make expedited and emergency direct requests of service providers. Participants were engaged in practical cross-border simulated exercises to appreciate the dynamic nature of electronic evidence. The need for national co-ordination was stressed in dealing with requests for preservation and use of electronic evidence across borders.

“ The workshop taught me the importance of preservation and policies of mutual legal assistance, with the group exercises highlighting the necessity of working together and communication between authorities.

Ms Kylie Wilson, a senior legislative drafter from Samoa

“ The training is useful and practical. The knowledge and materials from the training would be reference documents in my day-to-day work.

Ms Angelina Aruke, Cybercrime contact point in Cameroon

The workshops highlighted that Commonwealth member countries are keen to build connections and partnerships to strengthen electronic evidence handling and put in place systems to support the development of national cybersecurity response, including planning, incident response and cybercrime legislation.



Strengthening human rights systems in Dominica

Dominica is famously known as the 'Nature Island'. But in recent years this beautiful island has been ravaged by a tropical storm and a hurricane. They caused catastrophic damage to the country and to its economy. Less obvious was the impact these disasters had on Dominica's effective participation in international institutions, and particularly in international human rights mechanisms.

In April 2019, the Secretariat supported senior government officials and civil society organisations to prepare for a scheduled review of Dominica's human rights record by the UN Human Rights Council. As a result of a two-day capacity-building exercise, the government of Dominica agreed on the sharing of responsibilities among government agencies in a coordinated manner and work towards establishing a National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF), a best-practice model. Subsequently, additional technical and logistical support was extended to Dominica through the Commonwealth Small States Office when its delegation headed by Hon Francine Baron, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, were in Geneva for Dominica's review.

Commonwealth Blue Charter

The Commonwealth covers more than one-third of the world's coastal ocean and 47 out of 54 Commonwealth members have a coastline, highlighting the critical importance of the ocean to Commonwealth countries and the impact of the Commonwealth's to the oceans of the world. The Commonwealth Blue Charter is an agreement by all Commonwealth countries to work together for the sustainability of our ocean. Ten member-driven Action Groups, championed by 16 'Champion countries', rally action and support around some of the world's most pressing ocean challenges.

For example, one of the biggest threats to ocean life, from whales to seabirds to microscopic plankton, is marine plastic pollution. It is estimated that more than 12 m tonnes of plastic waste pollute the ocean each year. This global threat warrants a global response.

In April 2018, Vanuatu and the United Kingdom stepped forward to create an action group on marine plastic pollution, the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance, and the UK has contributed £61.4 million through the


Commonwealth Oceans Plastic Package to support Commonwealth countries to act on this issue.

Vanuatu is leading by example. In 2018 it became one of the first countries in the world to implement a ban on single-use plastic bags, straws and polystyrene food containers. A growing number of Commonwealth countries are also taking action at various levels, including Canada, which has spearheaded tackling plastic pollution when President of the G7. In addition, 27 Commonwealth countries have instituted a ban on single-use plastic carrier bags.

Other Commonwealth countries, through the Blue Charter Action Groups, are tackling priority issues such as sustainable 'blue' economies, aquaculture and coastal fisheries, protection and restoration of coral reefs and mangrove ecosystems, marine protected areas, ocean climate change and acidification, and the ocean observations needed to underpin all these areas.

The Secretariat is supporting the Blue Charter Action Groups to increase activity through sharing best practices, developing partnerships, training and capacity-building and addressing funding gaps. The Commonwealth Blue Charter Knowledge Hub provides a collaborative platform to allow for communication across Action Groups and among members. Fifteen Thematic Toolkits were developed to reflect the current state of knowledge on each Action Group area. In June 2019, the Secretariat convened a Blue Charter 'All-Champions' meeting in London from across the then 12 'champion' countries, which laid the groundwork to develop Action Group strategies.

All meetings have been moved online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, the Secretariat has delivered nine knowledge exchange webinars

 I'm really proud to be working with Vanuatu taking forward action on the Clean Ocean Alliance. This is something the Commonwealth can really celebrate. I'm really pleased the Secretariat is continuing to make sure that these things come through.

Rt Hon Dr Thérèse Coffey MP, (then) Minister of State of UK Government's Environment Department

for international audiences and trained over 400 government officials and scientists across eight topics through specialist online courses relevant to the Commonwealth Blue Charter. In addition, it has compiled 215 external training opportunities in a searchable training database made available to members.

To further support the work of the Action Groups, the Secretariat has forged strategic partnerships with leading institutions. The Blue Charter is also accelerating activity through the introduction of Action Group partnerships. These partnerships are aimed at providing assistance to turn Plans of Action into on-ground action across countries, regions and the Commonwealth. Earlier this year, a new funding database was launched, profiling 115 external ocean funders and providing access to opportunities worth over £125 million.

The scale and pace of action needed to tackle ocean sustainability requires collaboration across the globe. Countries involved in the Action Groups have already recognised this and have started building partnerships. Other governments can follow suit and translate their Blue Charter commitments into tangible actions towards a clean, healthy and productive ocean for us all.

Natural Resources

The Secretariat continues to assist member countries to manage their natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations, with ongoing support provided to 14 countries, 12 of which are small states. This involves advising on policy formulation, legislative and regulatory frameworks, including the design of fiscal systems to maximise government revenues, environmental protection, and contract negotiations. A core element of good governance is strong institutions and the Secretariat also delivers various capacity-building initiatives including customised training, peer to peer learning and knowledge products.

“The Commonwealth Blue Charter is very important for us because it commits a number of countries to the same objectives. If Vanuatu had to do it alone, it wouldn't get very far.”

Hon Ralph Regenvu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vanuatu

An example of technical assistance provided is Guyana's Natural Resources Fund Legislation, which is delivering effective and transparent management of US\$400 million of petroleum revenues to date, with future potential of over US\$40 billion.

The Secretariat also works in partnership with other multilateral institutions to ensure that member country interests are taken into account in the development of international standards. For example, the OECD's "Guiding Principles for Durable Extractive Contracts" and the International Seabed Authority's "Draft Regulations for Exploitation of Mineral Resources in the Area".

Recently this has included helping countries navigate the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the increasing impact of the climate crisis. This is of particular significance for petroleum-rich developing countries and has significant implications for employment, foreign direct investment and government revenues.

A just, equitable energy transition needs to support developing countries who are facing the daunting task of preparing for falling global demand for fossil fuels while simultaneously managing resources in pursuit of the SDGs and meeting commitments under the Paris Agreement. To address some of these issues, the Secretariat, in collaboration with key partners, successfully delivered a series of webinars, including the 'Fostering Resilience' series and virtual training on 'Aligning the Petroleum Sector with Climate, Energy and National Development Goals'.

Towards the UN Climate Change Conference COP26

The UN Climate Conference COP26, to be held in Glasgow 1-12 November 2021, will bring together leaders, negotiators and climate experts to adopt harmonised action for tackling climate change. Critical issues to be discussed include climate finance, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and nature-based solutions.

The Secretariat's participation will be at the strategic and technical levels. It will seek to amplify the issues, concerns and recommendations of Commonwealth countries, particularly small and other vulnerable states, as captured in the Commonwealth

Declaration on Climate Change. Other priorities include ocean climate action, engaging young people and promoting an inclusive and sustainable energy transition towards carbon neutrality by mid-century, under the Paris Agreement.

COP26 provides a platform to raise the profile of key initiatives such as the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub (CCFAH); the Commonwealth Call to Action on Living Lands; the Commonwealth Blue Charter (CBC); the Commonwealth Disaster Risk Finance Portal and the Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Transition Agenda (CSET). It is also an opportunity to build networks and partnerships, as well as mobilise resources, to support the goals of these programmes.

For COP26, the Secretariat will be organising its first Commonwealth Pavilion to serve as an inclusive and collaborative space for member countries and accredited organisations to meet, host side events and trainings, convene meetings and showcase research and analytical work.

Universal Vulnerability Index

Developed in the wake of COVID-19, a ground-breaking study has been developed by the Secretariat to assess how vulnerable or resilient developing countries are to economic, socio-political and environmental shocks, such as climate change, which could influence how much international finance they can access. The proposed Universal Vulnerability Index (UVI) has been shared with Commonwealth member countries for their review in ongoing consultations. If endorsed globally, the Index could transform the way development finance is delivered to developing nations, with a particular focus on small and vulnerable states, and encourage systems to move beyond the use of GDP as the sole criteria for receiving certain types of support.

Gender

The Secretariat has strengthened its ongoing efforts on the Commonwealth Priorities for Gender Equality through a range of initiatives in the following domains:

Advocacy and partnership: The Commonwealth Says NO MORE campaign, which tackles the

spike in domestic and sexual violence due to COVID-19 while providing long-term solutions to governments, non-profits and citizens to confront and end this problem. It promotes a positive partnership by building a coalition of governments, businesses, civil society and citizens committed to ending violence against women and girls.

Reform: The Equality in Law for Women and Girls strategy, developed in partnership with UN Women, seeks to reform laws that discriminate on grounds of gender so that women have equal rights to leave their abusive partners and hold the offenders to account.

Research: A pioneering research methodology, which helps countries measure the economic cost of violence against women and girls. The methodology was applied in Seychelles, which revealed that the country lost US\$65 million each year to violence against women and girls. Following its report, the Secretariat assisted Seychelles in finalising a new Domestic Violence Bill, which was passed in 2020. A similar report was produced for Lesotho in 2020 which found that the country lost 5.5 per cent of its GDP to violence against women and girls.

Convening: The inaugural meeting of the Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Action Group was held in May this year. Ministers reviewed the impact of the pandemic on women, provided advice on emerging gender issues and made strategic recommendations to the Secretariat on its programme delivery. The creation of the action group was requested by Commonwealth women's affairs ministers following their triennial meeting in Nairobi in 2019.

Resources: In September 2020, the Commonwealth Says NO MORE partnership, with the NO MORE Foundation, launched the first-ever pan-Commonwealth platform to address domestic and sexual violence. The online platform helps member countries record accurate data on the prevalence of violence, deliver grassroots projects, train community leaders, educate bystander responses and provide critical resources for those at risk.

Commonwealth Youth Programme

With a focus on mandates agreed by leaders and youth ministers, the Secretariat has been working to mainstream youth priorities into national development policies and plans, and to promote

the participation of young people at all levels of decision making.

Youth Mainstreaming

A comprehensive Commonwealth Youth Mainstreaming policy guide and toolkit, designed to support effective strategies and activities, was created and distributed to government ministries. This has been supplemented by six regional awareness-raising workshops to sensitise member countries on youth mainstreaming frameworks.

The Secretariat has offered tailored assistance to countries to implement youth mainstreaming strategies. So far, implementation plans have been developed for Kenya and Belize.

Through a partnership with Coventry University, twenty ministers and senior government officials from 19 countries received certified postgraduate training.

Youth Participation and Empowerment

The Secretariat created and implemented its Youth Participation Framework research project – designed to help us understand and address barriers to youth participation. Findings and recommendations have been shared with member countries.

The Secretariat continues to support and strengthen the 11 youth networks, which facilitate youth participation in decision making and are focused on key priorities, such as climate change and human rights.

The annual Youth Awards have helped to fund and promote youth-led initiatives, which are providing life-changing support to Commonwealth populations and helping countries achieve their SDGs. Finalists and winners have had their projects promoted globally resulting in further funding and the growth of their initiatives.

The Secretariat produced and launched the third iteration of our pioneering Youth Development Index which measures multi-dimensional progress on youth development in 181 countries. This standard-setting, advocacy tool, supports evidence-based youth-centric planning, data disaggregation and monitoring. Its methodology and approach have been adopted by ASEAN, Caribbean Community and Africa Union (AU) heads, with the Secretariat supporting the AU to produce its first report, and Pakistan and Namibia to develop national indices.

Health

The Commonwealth Secretariat has been accelerating its ongoing advocacy, research and convening efforts to support member countries towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 3 for good health and well-being.

As a platform for multilateral and co-ordinated action, Commonwealth Health Ministers have been meeting regularly ahead of the World Health Assembly to discuss shared priorities for the well-being of their people and practical ways to strengthen their health systems, particularly through Universal Health Coverage with a focus on safeguarding women, children and other vulnerable groups.

In this regard, the Secretariat has been working on a toolkit and advocacy guide to help member countries accelerate the implementation of Universal Health Coverage across the Commonwealth, with a focus on the political economy. The proposed toolkit was reviewed by the health ministers at their annual gathering in 2019.

The Secretariat has also been supporting member countries in reducing the prevalence of non-communicable diseases by raising awareness, mobilising resources, and strengthening access to Universal Health Coverage.

In addition, the Secretariat has been working closely with accredited organisations and partner agencies to assist member countries on mandates coming from the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. Significant progress has been made on three priority areas:

- **Trachoma** – The Trachoma Report produced by the Vision for the Commonwealth Coalition showed that meaningful progress has been made on blinding trachoma, which shows that the disease can be eliminated in the Commonwealth. The number of people at risk of eye disease trachoma, which can lead to blindness, has almost halved since 2018. Malawi has reached the elimination threshold and is now in a two-year surveillance period. Vanuatu has submitted an elimination of trachoma report to WHO.
- **Malaria** – Working with Malaria NO MORE, a malaria tracker and a progress report have been launched this year to help Commonwealth countries monitor progress

towards halving malaria cases by 2023 and ultimately ending the disease by 2030. The report shows significant progress with nearly one-third of malaria-endemic Commonwealth countries on track to halve their case incidence and mortality rate from the disease by the end of 2019. Despite country-level progress, as a grouping, the Commonwealth is currently not on track to reach the 50 per cent reduction target. The report calls on countries to accelerate action in the coming years to reach the historic target in the face of severe disruptions in malaria services caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Cervical Cancer** – The Commonwealth Secretariat and the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) have launched a new taskforce to step up efforts towards preventing and treating cervical cancer. The taskforce's first actions include guiding the Secretariat in developing an action plan with key milestones up to 2030, and shaping messages that will inform discussions about cancer prevention and treatment at the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Rwanda.

Acute shortages of essential health supplies, drugs, equipment and tests have been a significant challenge during the pandemic. Even before COVID-19, the Secretariat was developing a Commonwealth price-sharing database for medicines, aimed at cutting the costs of essential medicines, vaccines and technologies, especially for poorer countries. The database will be launched later this year.

The Secretariat also recognises health innovations from young people and have enabled them to showcase their pioneering innovations. For example:

- **Rayvon Stewart, Jamaica:** A door handle sanitiser that helps medical facilities, businesses, schools protect people from deadly microorganisms present on doorknobs, especially in high traffic environments.
- **Nitesh Kumar Jangir, India:** A neonatal breathing support device for low resource settings, with multiple powering options, which maintains respiration and oxygenation in premature neonates with RDS (Respiratory Distress Syndrome) by providing constant airflow and pressure to keep the lungs open during transport to a tertiary care setting.

More broadly the Secretariat and member countries are clear that after COVID-19, we must not go back to business-as-usual. Our new health care normal should provide Universal Health Coverage to all citizens, introduce social protection system that covers the poor, put the economic recovery on a sustainable development path and build resilience to any convulsive crisis.

Sport for Development and Peace

The Commonwealth Secretariat has been supporting member countries to develop, implement and measure the impact of policies and strategies aimed at maximising the contribution of sport to national development objectives and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This work focuses on the intentional use of sport as a tool in advancing socio-economic development and strengthening governance, gender equality, inclusion and the protection and promotion of human rights in and through sport.

The Secretariat has been recognised as a global leader in the sport for development and peace sector and plays a key co-ordination role in building consensus among member countries and liaising with UN and intergovernmental organisations, sports bodies, academia and civil society.

The Commonwealth's consensus-building work includes supporting the development of a Commonwealth Consensus Statement on Promoting Human Rights in and Through Sport. A Commonwealth Consensus Statement was adopted in 2020 by Sports Ministers and will be formally adopted at CHOOGM. It includes a commitment by countries to intensify the fight against racism and discrimination in and through sport.

The Consensus Statement builds on agreements by Commonwealth Heads of Government to take collective action to promote good governance, address corruption, protect the integrity of sport, and promote human rights in and through sport, and of Commonwealth Sports Ministers that advancing in and through sport, equality must be a core sport policy issue.

The Commonwealth has been playing an important role in building capacity across member countries on sport, sustainable development and human rights. This is





delivered through both in-country technical assistance and delivering direct training to sport policymakers and practitioners. In July 2020, the Commonwealth launched the first-ever global Mass Open Online Course on designing policies and programmes was launched. It includes a focus on inclusion and addressing discrimination as fundamental and cross-cutting issues for policy and programme design. In the first week, the course was live more than 1,300 learners from over 100 countries had enrolled.

The Commonwealth has been providing direct technical assistance to member governments to support the revision and formulation of national sport policies, strategies and monitoring and evaluation systems. Protecting and promoting human rights constitutes a key pillar of this work, with issues of equality, addressing discrimination, inclusion and safeguarding set out as key policy priorities. This work is supplemented by the development of toolkits and technical resources to assist member countries to strengthen national policy frameworks. Over the past four-year period the share of Commonwealth countries that have national policies or strategies that address sport and sustainable development has increased from 40 per cent to 61 per cent.

This Commonwealth leads and co-ordinates a high-profile global initiative to develop common indicators on sport and SDGs, spearheading the work of multiple UN agencies, Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth member countries and leaders of the global sports movement. As protecting and promoting human rights is fundamental to the SDG agenda, these indicators help provide a framework for countries to measure progress in advancing the fight against discrimination in sport including monitoring inequality and facilitating inclusion in sport in sport participation, the sport workforce and sport leadership.

Delivery of CHOGM 2018 Mandates

Since 2018 the Commonwealth Secretariat has been working to deliver upon the mandates set by leaders at the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. This work covers eight areas and their delivery is a key function of the Secretariat.

1 Strengthening Democratic Institutions and Promoting Peace – Election Observation in Member Countries

Mandate: In 2018 Heads agreed to a refreshed approach to Election Observation, through the adoption of a Revised Commonwealth Guidelines on Election Observation in Member Countries.

Output: Member countries conduct fair, credible and inclusive elections.

The Secretariat has facilitated observation of nine electoral events, in accordance with guidelines adopted at CHOGM in 2018. While the pandemic continues to present significant challenges to the deployment of observation missions, the observation missions to Ghana, Saint Lucia and Zambia since 2020 were successful, and provided many lessons for adaptation that have been taken forward. The Secretariat also provided support for capacity building and training for election officials across the Commonwealth.

2 Strengthening Democratic Institutions and Promoting Peace – The Latimer House Principles

Mandate: Heads reaffirmed their commitment to the Commonwealth Latimer House Principles on the Accountability of and Relationship between the Three Branches of Government.

Output: The rule of law strengthened and access to justice ensured for all.

The Secretariat uses dialogue, mediation, consensus building and awareness raising as outlined in the Latimer House Principles Toolkits. Training activity for parliamentarians on the Latimer House Principles has been curtailed by the pandemic but the Secretariat with the Commonwealth Latimer House Working Group have continued to use other options for providing support including webinars and online training.

3 A More Prosperous Future – Commonwealth Small States Office

Mandate: Heads welcomed initiatives to strengthen the Commonwealth Small States Office in Geneva to support small and developing states to participate in the multilateral trading system and benefit from trade-related economic growth.

Output: Effective mechanisms for increased trade, employment and business growth and Commonwealth positions, advanced in international development and financing mechanisms.

Trade Advisers have been based in the Commonwealth Small States Office in Geneva since January 2019. They provide technical and advocacy support to small states' delegations on World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations issues, and the implementation of the WTO trade facilitation agreement. They have supported small states to follow or participate in negotiations at the WTO on fisheries, e-commerce, investment facilitation, and on micro, small and medium enterprises and services.

4 Intra-Commonwealth Trade and Investment – Connectivity Agenda

Mandate: Heads adopted a Declaration on the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda for Trade and Investment and mandated the Secretariat to develop an accompanying action plan.

Output: Develop an accompanying action plan that considers capacity building and hard and soft connectivity.

The Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda is a member-led initiative to boost intra-Commonwealth trade to US\$2 trillion by 2030 and expand investment, by providing a platform for structured knowledge and experience sharing and undertaking capacity building around connectivity. Since 2018, the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda has delivered extensively across the Commonwealth.

5 A More Sustainable Future – Small and Vulnerable States, Universal Vulnerability, Climate Change and National Disasters

Mandate: Heads encouraged the Secretariat to collaborate with international organisations, including disaster response agencies, to better support member countries that suffer severe impacts from natural disasters.

Output: International policies, mechanisms and rules more responsive to small states' development strategies and resilience needs.

The Secretariat has undertaken a range of strategic activities in support of small states including the launch of its Universal Vulnerability Index report, comprising of a robust methodology for the assessment of vulnerability and providing a set of recommendations for global financial institutions. It launched the Commonwealth disaster risk finance portal, which will help member countries access financial support to prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disaster and also carried out advocacy in relation to small states' needs in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. It also launched the Commonwealth Fintech Toolkit in October 2020 and is developing a Virtual Centre for Small States.

6 A More Sustainable Future – the Blue Charter

Mandate: Heads adopted the Commonwealth Blue Charter, setting out the principles by which Commonwealth member countries will lead international efforts by sustainably developing and protecting their ocean.

Output: Sustainable development of marine and other natural resources, including 'blue economies'

The Commonwealth Blue Charter, as adopted at CHOGM 2018, represented the commitment by Commonwealth member countries to work together in addressing pressing ocean issues of shared concern. The Blue Charter 'Action Groups' are the vehicles by which this cooperation is being carried out. There are 10 Action Groups on different topics championed by 16 countries. A total of 46 Commonwealth countries are members of one or more of the Action Groups.

7 A More Sustainable Future – Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Transitions

Mandate: Heads recognised the critical importance of sustainable energy to economic development and agreed to share best practice in effectively developing, governing and managing natural resources on the basis of sustainability, equity, transparency, good governance and wealth creation.

To further this work the Secretariat has supported a Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Forum which agreed to an outcome statement which formed the basis for terms of reference for the Forum. It has signed an MoU with the International Solar Alliance aimed at accelerating uptake of solar energy in member countries.

A second Forum was held in May 2021 ahead of the UN High level dialogue on Energy planned for September 2021 on Energy and COP 26. The Commonwealth Secretariat has developed a Toolkit in collaboration with UN Sustainable Energy for All, to support SIDS in developing business cases for mobilising funding for clean energy investments.

8 A More Secure Future – Commonwealth Cyber Declaration

Mandate: Heads adopted a Commonwealth Cyber Declaration that set out a common commitment to an open, democratic peaceful and secure internet, respecting human rights and freedom of expression.

Output: Increase co-operation across the Commonwealth as outlined in the Cyber Declaration.

The Commonwealth Cyber Declaration sets common commitments on:

A cyberspace that supports economic and social development and rights online; builds the foundations of an effective national cyber security response and promotes stability in cyberspace through international cooperation.

Following pilot projects the Secretariat rolled out a range of interventions across the Commonwealth these included actions such as mapping of cybercrime laws in the Pacific, capacity building to support Commonwealth countries, cybercrime law and policy reviews in some member countries, the training of law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges on cybercrime investigation, and the development of training modules on cybercrime investigation for integration into national training institutions in the Caribbean.





Working for You



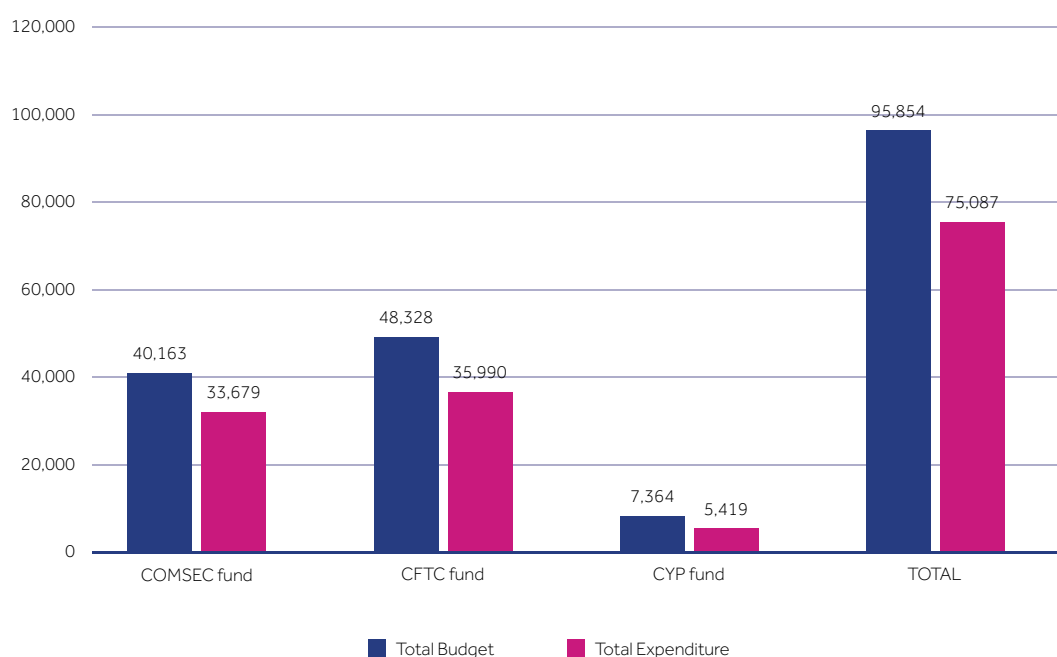
Delivering on our commitments and achieving value for money

The Commonwealth Secretariat has been changing the way it works, with the aim of delivering benefits to more of the Commonwealth's 2.5 billion citizens while achieving better value for money. The Secretariat wants to be more responsive to members' needs and to be able to measure our impact.

This process of transformation began in 2016, when Secretary-General Scotland became Secretary-General with a mandate for reform. A new streamlined structure was put in place and improvements were made to our strategic

planning, including a new delivery plan. The Secretariat has achieved significant savings, which means a greater share of funding flows through to our programmes to support member countries.

Figure 1: Total Direct Budget – Summary Performance by fund (£'000)



Financial performance

The Secretariat's total direct budget expenditures during the three years ended 30 June 2021 amounted to £75.1 million. This reflects 78% expenditure of the approved direct budget of £95.9 million for the three financial years to 2020/21.

The Secretariat implemented a total of 45 projects in the three years to 2020/21. Of the approved budget, 50% was allocated to the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC), 42% and 8% were allocated to the COMSEC fund and CYP fund respectively. The funds had been partially financed by £4.2 million in designated funds and £15.1 million in Extra Budgetary Resources for specific programme implementation.

The approved direct budget of £95.9 million for the three financial years to 2020/21 was split between programme costs budget at £59.0 million (62%) and staff costs budget at £36.9 million (38%). Total direct budget expenditures of £75.1 million during the three-year period constitute £42.1 million (56%) and £33 million (44%) towards programme expenditures and staff expenditures respectively.

Expenditure across the funds of £75.1 million constitute £33.7 million of a planned £40.2 million in COMSEC (84%); £36.0 million of a planned £48.3 million in CFTC (74%), and £5.4 million of a planned £7.4 million in CYP (73%). Figure 12 below illustrates the performance of each fund.

Figure 2: Total Direct Budget – Summary Performance by Outcome (£'000)



Our progress in delivery

Many of the projects delivered by the Secretariat are about engaging and influencing complex systems. This takes place through a number of impact pathways. Changes at the intermediate outcome are not small-scale changes, but large shifts in policy, governance and decision-making at national and global level, which take place over several years.

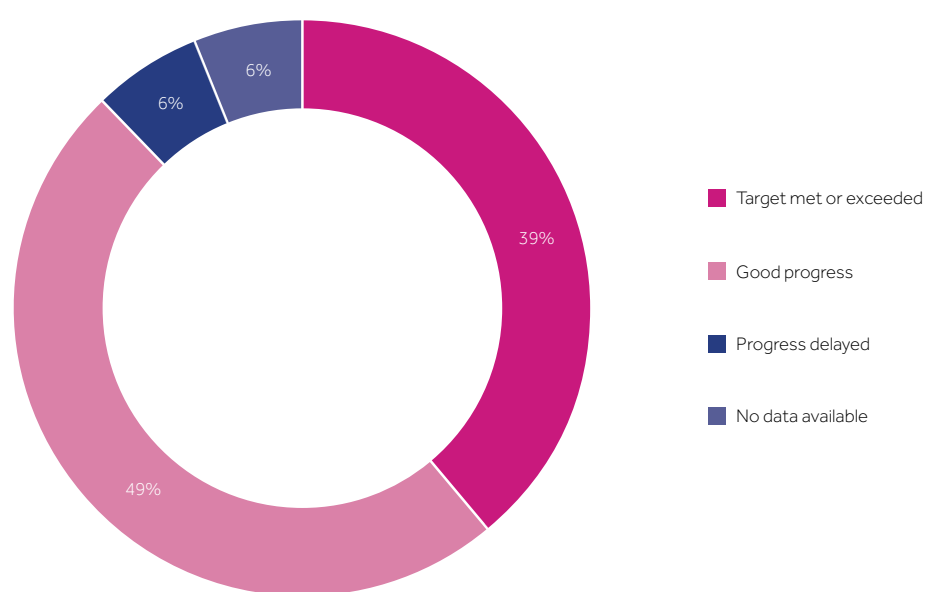
In the final year of the Strategic Plan, the Secretariat is starting to see progress towards intermediate outcome level results.

At the intermediate outcome level, the Secretariat is looking specifically at changes in behavior, practice or performance of intermediaries or beneficiaries. In many of the projects that the Secretariat is delivering, these high-level changes take many years to be realised and involve engaging

and influencing complex systems. The Secretariat works to influence these complex and systemic changes through a number of impact pathways. It measures progress through 79 intermediate outcome indicators. In the final year of the Strategic

Plan, the Secretariat has made substantial progress towards Intermediate Outcomes, however COVID-19 has impacted some outcome indicators; accelerating progress in some areas and delaying progress in others.

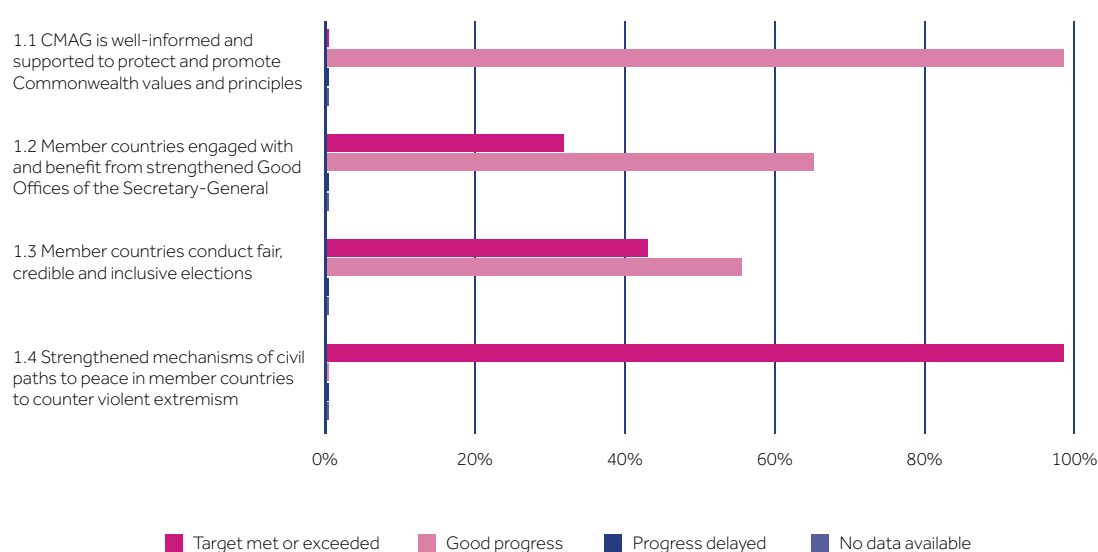
Figure 3: Delivery status of Intermediate Outcomes 2020/21



The Secretariat has made good progress against its 79 indicators at the intermediate outcome level. This is an encouraging trend evidencing clear and lasting value being delivered to member countries by

the Secretariat. These intermediate outcome level indicators are the higher-level results in our strategy, which map changes in performance, behaviours and practices of beneficiaries and partners in the

Figure 4: Delivery status of intermediate outcomes 2020/21 in Democracy



Secretariat's interventions. These are systemic changes, influenced by complex and interlinking factors and take multiple years to mature.

The overall aggregated percentages provide an indication as to how well the Commonwealth Secretariat is progressing towards meeting its intermediate outcomes across the portfolio.

The following section looks at each intermediate outcome level progress by strategic stream to better demonstrate the nuances of the progress so that they can be better understood.

The Secretariat tracks 13 intermediate outcome indicators for its work in the Democracy stream, measuring progress towards implementation of policy and legislation and progressing institutional development, the creation of knowledge and empowerment of networks. Across the Democracy stream, projects were making progress prior to the onset of COVID-19, however monitoring activities were challenged by lockdown and travel measures.

Within the Secretariat's Election work, all the interventions are aiming to support member countries to conduct transparent, credible and inclusive elections. Despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic travel and lockdown restrictions, the Commonwealth Election Professionals (CEP) Initiative continues to facilitate virtual meetings with election officials from Election Management Bodies (EMBs) around the Commonwealth, with a recent survey of the virtual meetings finding that 85 per cent

of participants found the sessions relevant. In response to requests for guidance and examples of emerging best practice, the Secretariat published the first paper in a series focusing on COVID-19 and elections management that drew on survey results from all Commonwealth Election Management Bodies.

The intermediate outcome indicators on member countries implementing Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) recommendations has progressed, with work continuing in Cameroon and Seychelles. The Secretariat provided capacity-building support, which enabled the Election Commission of Cameroon (ELECAM) to train 52 senior and board-level election officials. ELECAM has expressed appreciation for this assistance and have requested additional capacity building from the Secretariat. In Seychelles, the Secretariat provided support and virtual advice to a citizen observer organisation, as part of broader efforts to strengthen the conduct of elections in Seychelles.

Regarding Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group's (CMAG) strengthened mandate, Ministers have endorsed the Secretariat's technical support to implement recommendations, and progress is being made in some of the countries engaged.

The Secretariat tracks 14 intermediate outcome indicators in its Public Institutions work, mostly measuring progress towards implementation of policy and legislation and progressing institutional development. Across the public

Figure 5: Delivery status of intermediate outcomes 2020/21 in Public Institutions

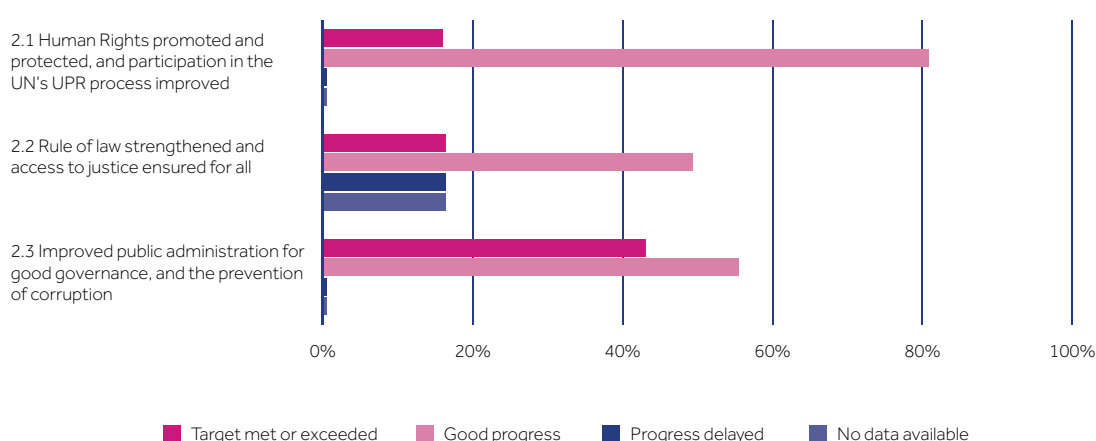
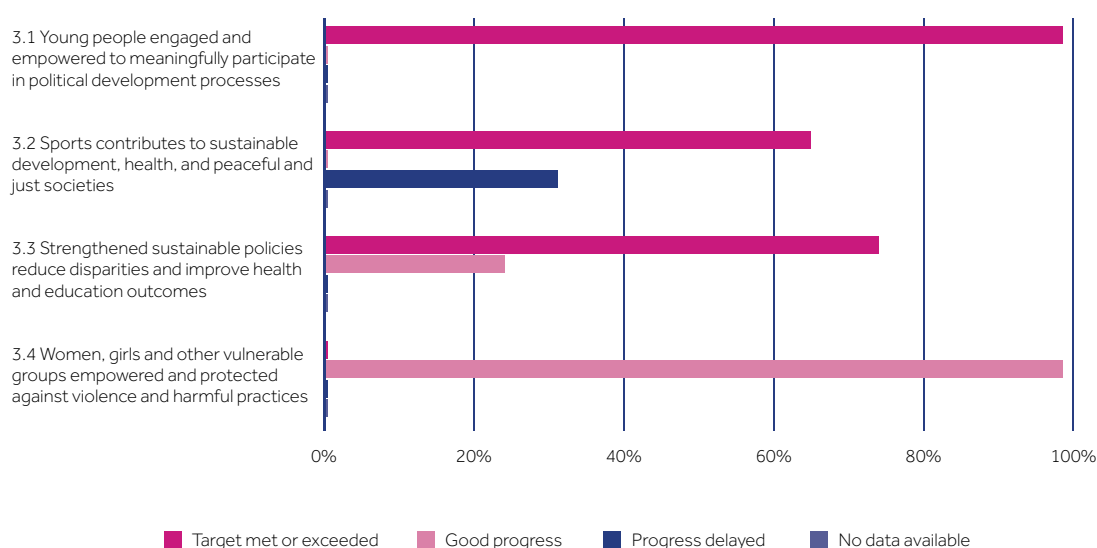


Figure 6: Delivery status of intermediate outcomes 2020/21 in Youth and Social Development



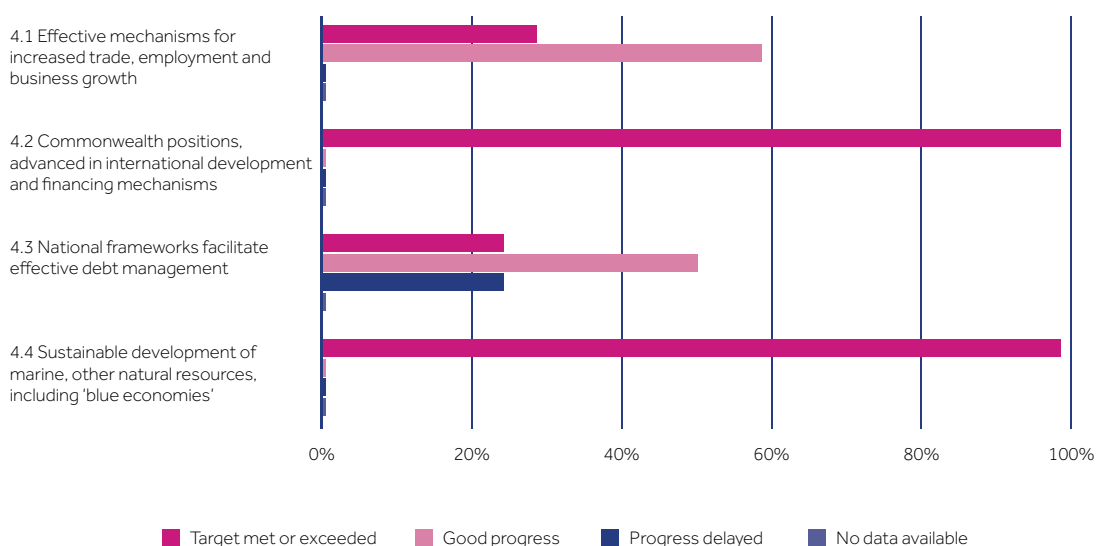
institutions stream, progress has been made towards the intermediate outcome change. A variety of indicators are tracked at the intermediate outcome level; from the number of Commonwealth countries with improved response to cyber-crime in line with the Commonwealth Cyber Declaration, to number of targeted member countries effectively engaging with international human rights mechanisms. These indicators highlight the breath of systemic changes that the Commonwealth Secretariat is supporting in this area. One result the Secretariat is aiming to achieve in this area is supporting member countries to improve engagement in international human rights mechanisms. During the last reporting period the five Resident Missions at the Commonwealth Small States Office (CSSO), namely Guyana, Malawi, Seychelles, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu reported improved engagement in international human rights mechanisms and satisfaction with the support of Commonwealth human rights advisers at the CSSO Annual General Meeting held on 26 November 2020. The Secretariat will continue to work towards this outcome level indicator for the remainder of the current strategic plan period.

The Secretariat tracks 9 intermediate outcome indicators in the Youth and Social Development stream, measuring progress towards policy and legislation, institutional development and the empowerment of networks. Across the Youth

and Social Development stream, while COVID-19 lockdown and travel restrictions has delayed some planned deliverables, overall progress continues towards intermediate outcome changes. There is a broad range of projects and intermediate outcome indicators, focusing on youth, health, education and women's empowerment. The Secretariat has focused on developing a quality system that enables support for youth work through youth networks, youth advocacy within high-level government decision-making processes, and the adaptation of the innovative Youth Development Index (YDI) that measures the status of young people across five critical domains in the Commonwealth. The creation and ongoing support of a youth work ecosystem, with voluntary and active youth participation at its core is a continuous and long-term process. This body of important work changes over time as the global landscape evolves. For example, over the reporting period, the Secretariat supported a virtual meeting with youth ministries across the Caribbean and Asia regions to discuss the impact and opportunities of COVID-19 on youth development and engagement. As more youth networks continue to be established across member countries, the Secretariat will continue to provide technical assistance to develop new youth policies.

The Secretariat tracks 18 indicators in Economic Development, with good progress across the economic development stream being made

Figure 7: Delivery status of intermediate outcomes 2020/21 in Economic Development



towards the intermediate outcome change. The intermediate outcome level indicators across the projects in this stream particularly demonstrate the seismic shifts that projects are working towards. For example, in the area of trade competitiveness teams are working towards a 'Number of targeted member countries implementing export diversification strategies'. While evidence of implementation is present in some of the countries that the Secretariat is engaged in, other countries are in the stage of adopting the national strategies and plans. The evidence of implementation against these in all targeted member countries may not emerge by the end of the Strategic Plan period in part due to the impact of COVID-19 on the priorities of member countries.

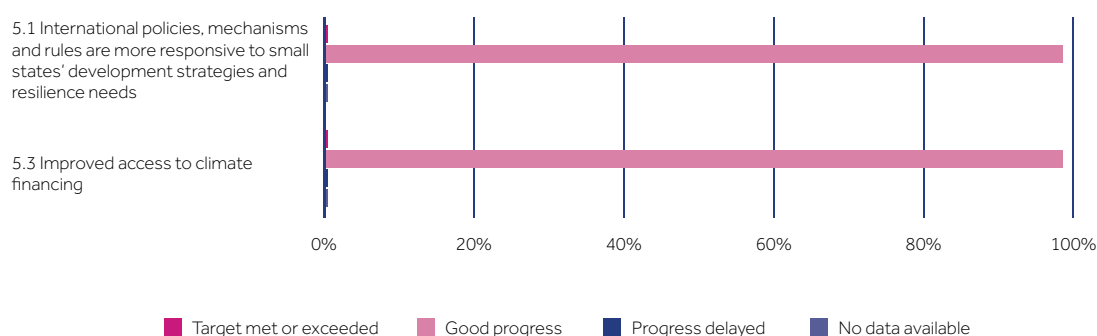
On Debt Management, the intermediate outcome indicator is the Member countries that have the capacity to effectively use Meridian for debt management. A total of 17 countries have now installed and implemented Commonwealth Meridian. Countries are at various stages of the implementation process. Capacity-building is a core component of the implementation process. Member countries' Debt Managers are trained and gain the required knowledge to use and support the system.

In Oceans and Natural Resources, the outcome 'Number of member countries implementing Secretariat policy, legal, fiscal or strategic

guidance towards the improved and sustainable management of their natural resources' has exceeded the target, with 14 countries accepting recommendations from the Secretariat to review policies and practices (these are: The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Cook Islands, Guyana, Jamaica, eSwatini, Kiribati, Malawi, Namibia, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu). In addition, capacity building is a core element of support and over 25 knowledge exchange and peer to peer learnings were successfully delivered.

For the indicator 'number of supported member countries making demonstrable progress in defining, planning or developing their blue economies', the target of 8 countries has been achieved. In the Eastern Caribbean region, Antigua and Barbuda set a bold framework for consolidating the management of its maritime space, reaching agreement with the United Kingdom in respect of Anguilla in 2021, having previously agreed with France in respect of Martinique, Guadeloupe and St Barthélemy in 2016. Additional Secretariat legal and policy support includes drafting of the Antigua and Barbuda National Maritime Policy and National Maritime Transportation Policy, respectively,, Guyana and the Eastern Caribbean countries and territories of Anguilla, Montserrat, Saint Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines continue to show progress in developing Blue Economy Roadmaps, National Ocean Policies, strengthening maritime administrations and revising maritime zone and marine pollution prevention legislation.

Figure 8: Delivery status of intermediate outcomes 2020/21 in Small and Other Vulnerable States



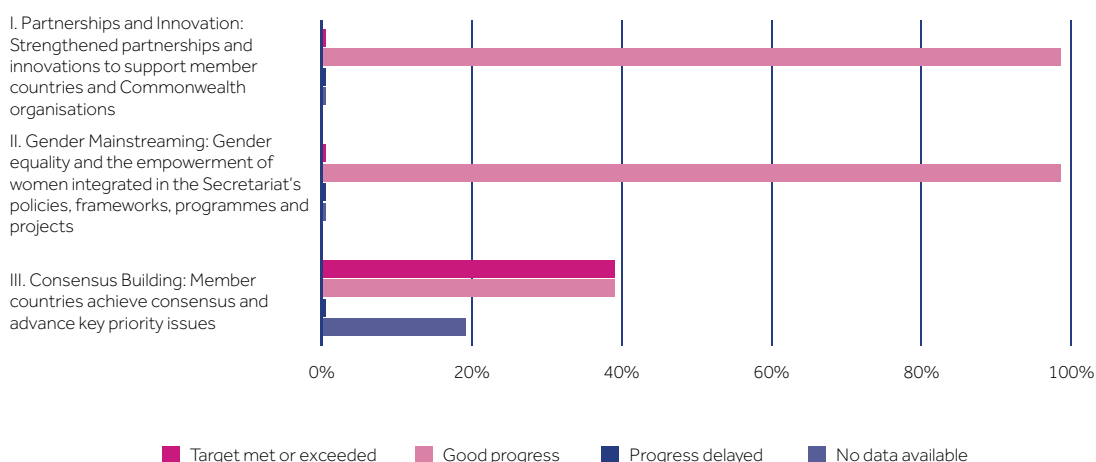
In the Pacific Region and Indian Ocean, the drafting of the Kiribati Ocean Policy is advancing. Seychelles also continues implementation of its Strategic Blue Economy Framework and Roadmap – adopted in 2018. And finally, under the Commonwealth Blue Charter, 11 member countries have made progress on defining, planning, protecting, managing or developing their ocean space, exceeding the outcome target of 8.

By looking in depth at the project that is supporting the Commonwealth Small States office in Geneva to effectively and meaningfully participate in the multilateral trade negotiations, it is clear to see that the level of change these projects are working towards at the intermediate outcome are at large scale, long term shifts like international trade policy. The indicator is focusing on tracking the number of member countries that successfully negotiate trade agreements. Whilst the trade section is proving effective in its work to equip small states with the means to engage, negotiate and implement trade facilitation agreements, the higher-level intermediate outcome level will take longer to mature and well beyond the current strategic plan.

The 'Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Economic Development Programme 2013/14 – 2016/17' was completed during the reporting period and published in September 2020. The report provides relevant recommendations as well as highlighted key learnings for the programme. Recommendations included the need for adopting longer-term planning, with budget and project ambitions to be more closely in sync with one another as well as programme-related learnings for the team to take forward.

The Secretariat tracks 3 indicators in its work advocating for small states and building capacity. The intermediate outcome level indicators across the projects aim to measure large scale change for the benefit of small and other vulnerable states. For example, one intermediate outcome indicator measures the 'number of tracked international policies, mechanisms and/or rules amended or more responsive to small states development strategies and resilience needs' faced some delays. Herein discussions with the UN Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Office to create a joint Commonwealth-UN advocacy strategy to promote small state concerns were initiated. This strategy also aimed to promote the Samoa Pathway within the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) context. However, with the COVID-19 related delay in the 2019/20 Small States Ministerial Meeting, progress has been delayed. In its place, the Secretariat continues to advocate on the impacts of COVID-19 on small and vulnerable states through activities such as the virtual seminar series on 'the Economics of COVID-19'.

In the area of access to climate finance, there is clear progress towards 'Value of climate finance (USD Millions) accessed by supported member countries' as a result of the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub with a total of US\$34m of climate finance (US\$ millions at the time of the report) accessed by supported member countries. There is also good progress towards the 'Target Number of member countries accessing international climate finance (and/or readiness finance) due to Commonwealth interventions' and the evaluation completed in December has provided recommendations and key lessons. After significant human resource challenges and a long process of partnership

Figure 9: Delivery status of intermediate outcomes 2020/21 in Cross-Cutting Outcomes

development with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the project on increased resilience, adaptation and mitigation against climate change has been developed and commenced in late 2019 - 2020. It is therefore not possible to measure progress against this outcome at this stage.

The Secretariat tracks 13 indicators in the cross-cutting area. A diverse set of indicators are tracked within this area of work, from the number of member countries who have engaged with innovation platforms and tools; to the share of Secretariat's policy outputs that address gender equality and the empowerment of women; to the successful convening of ministerial meetings.

COVID-19 has presented challenges in the consensus building space to the extent that the 2020 CHOGM delayed until 2021, as well as transitioning to virtual meeting platforms. A large portion of meetings have been conducted virtually where scheduled. The Commonwealth Finance Minister's meeting was conducted virtually as planned in October. For the first time, member countries reached a consensus on acknowledging the need to reform the global financing architecture. They unanimously agreed in principle that vulnerability should also be considered as a criterion to access concessional finance. The Outcome statement mentions that COVID-19 has increased the vulnerability of workers, especially women and girls and other marginalised groups working in the informal economy and migrant workers. Therefore, they affirmed their

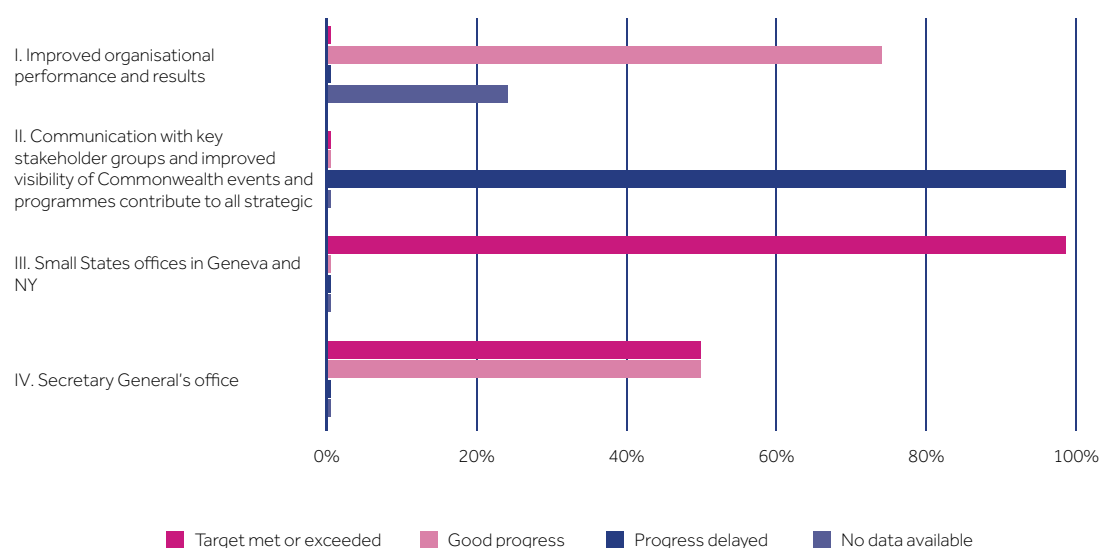
commitment to ensure that those temporary shocks don't have long-lasting effects.

The existing challenges in the lack of robust data available to evidence intermediate outcome level changes remain in the virtual environment to secure data on the share of participants in dialogue that report satisfaction with the quality, content and effectiveness of the meetings. This is predominantly due to limitations associated with surveying ministerial-level participants in international fora. An evaluation of the Consensus building programme has commenced in February 2021, from which the recommendations can help to strengthen learnings for the new Strategic Plan.

The Secretariat tracks 9 indicators across its internal outcomes work with a wide range of intermediate outcomes ranging from improved participation in multilateralism mechanisms and decision-making for Small States, to evidencing satisfactory achievement of results through evaluations.

Looking at the intermediate outcome level for the Commonwealth profile, good progress is being made at the short-term outcome level. For example, the number of visitors to the Commonwealth website reached over one million during the reporting period and a redesign and build of the Commonwealth website is underway which hopes to drive more impactful engagement with wider audiences. However, it has been problematic to assess the two intermediate

Figure 10: Delivery status of intermediate outcomes 2020/21 in Internal Outcomes



outcome indicators for this area ('Share of Commonwealth citizens which agree that the Commonwealth is 'relevant' or 'highly relevant' in global politics' and 'Share of Commonwealth citizens which report that they have a clear understanding of what the Commonwealth delivers for its member countries,') as gathering global data of this scale is difficult and would absorb substantial financial resources and has not been considered cost effective. With the launch of the new website and the growth of other digital channels through which to assess engagement and impact new more cost effective ways of measuring the profile of the Commonwealth are being explored.

The Commonwealth Small States Offices in Geneva and New York provide an example of a project where intermediate outcome level progress is clearer to demonstrate. Because the Secretariat has set up the Small States office in Geneva and New York, attributing the increase in participation in international dialogue to the Secretariat is more straightforward to evidence. Under the directions of local authorities, the Commonwealth Small States Office in Geneva remains closed but has continued to provide support to permanent missions to participate in international dialogues and decision-making processes virtually.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

The Secretariat has made progress in the way it delivers and measures results. This includes the introduction of a suite of smart portfolio practices, with annual delivery plans, quarterly performance reviews and enhanced results-based management. A results-based monitoring, evaluation and learning system is now being implemented. Several monitoring practices have been piloted and embedded, including detailed project monitoring plans, gender sensitive indicator training, delivery tracking and quarterly performance reporting and monitoring missions.

These practices have improved the delivery of projects, providing up-to-date information that helps us to make changes in a timely way.

The Secretariat has also taken steps to strengthen our approach to project evaluations, including input from independent assessors, and all country and programme evaluations are peer reviewed by external subject experts.

Better value for money – improving procurement

Reform of procurement

To ensure that the Secretariat is always delivering value for money extensive reform of the organisation's procurement procedures has been a top priority for the past five years.

In 2016 a new external procurement website was established to increase transparency and a Procurement Follow Up Internal Audit report in March that year stated that Secretariat received a rating of significant assurance with minor improvement opportunities, these improvements have been completed.

Through 2016 the Secretariat's first Procurement Code of Ethics for suppliers was implemented and Secretariat-wide staff training in procurement was delivered. Working with internal and external stakeholders a procurement manual was also implemented in September 2016 along with refreshed invitation to tender templates aimed at increasing the transparency of procurement processes and improving the level playing field for bidders.

An external review of the procurement function through 2016-17 recommended the establishment of a permanent procurement function within the Secretariat with defined roles and responsibilities. Its purpose was to deliver a professional procurement structure and control at a senior level while utilising category management for key areas of spend and support for purchasing at a low value level. This model was aimed at delivering additional value to the organisation while also providing greater control and visibility of third-party expenditure.

From 2018 staff were recruited to establish this permanent procurement function with a Procurement Manager in post from November 2018, and a procurement officer and assistant both in post in 2019. Procurement then became a standalone function in June 2019 concluding the recommendations of the external review with the new function initially reporting to the Director of Corporate Compliance.

The process of improvement continued from 2019 with senior stakeholder engagement undertaken with findings from procurement benchmarking against UN organisations presented to senior management and feedback

incorporated into the Secretariat's Procurement Manual update of 2019.

A Procurement Internal Audit report in September 2019 focused on the adequacy of processes in place in relation to tender waivers and declarations of interest with the report focusing on activity during the period of July 2015 to June 2018. The follow-up audit report dated February 2020 confirmed that all 6 recommendations had been implemented. Further, internal auditors were satisfied that the Secretariat's Procurement Manual reflected established industry practice.

A further Procurement Internal Audit report in April 2020 identified that processes had improved and were generally well-designed, with some additional opportunities for development with its recommendations implemented in the Procurement Manual update in October 2020.

In 2020 Capita was engaged to conduct an external review of the Secretariat's procurement processes and structure. The Capita review resulted in recommendations, which were grouped into four key themes:

- Automation of procurement processes
- Procurement team structure
- Training and awareness
- Procurement efficiencies and savings targets

At time of publication most of these recommendations have been implemented and the remaining are due for implementation over the next couple of months.

In 2020 another external review of the Procurement function included 24 recommendations, including the establishment of two additional procurement posts in the Procurement function to enable a more strategic approach to procurement.

Reform in action

This focus on reforming procurement has led to significant improvement. Between January and December 2020, the procurement team delivered 14 Secretariat-wide training sessions embedding updated procurement processes and procedures. Controls have also improved with the procurement team implementing spot

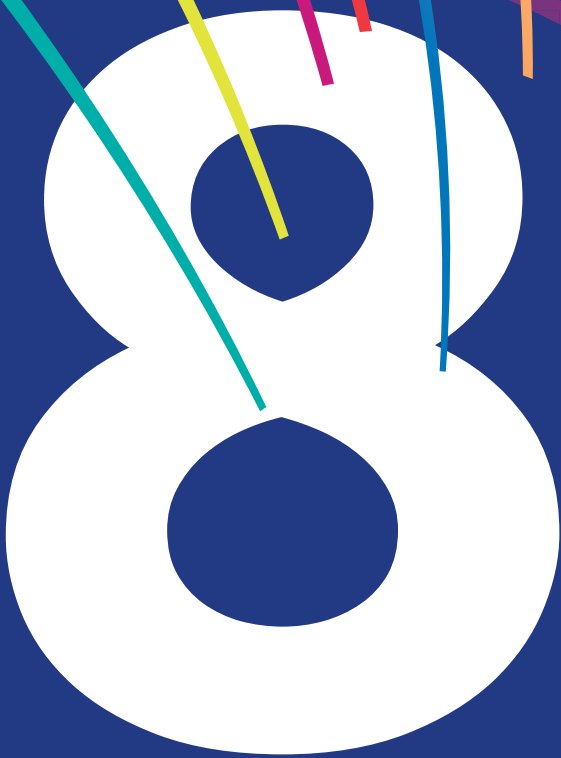
checks on low-cost contracts and goods and services under £30k.

An e-learning training pack was developed and launched as part of the Secretariat's mandatory Commonwealth Essentials Programme in 2021 and a procurement help desk will be launched in Autumn 2021 to assist and support staff.

Automated authority to engage (ATE) processes will be rolled out by end of 2021 including, an automated approach to tactical procurement through deployment of an e-tendering and e-contract management system. This will, over time, enhance transparency, improve the controls framework, and deliver increased efficiency gains.







A Future Commonwealth



Our Commonwealth is unique. As free, democratic and independent countries we choose to associate ourselves with each other, not through treaty or legal code but through the bonds of shared history, friendship and a vision for the common good.

Our exceptionalism comes not from a belief that we are inherently superior but in our acknowledgement that, whatever our race, creed or colour, we hold shared humanity and equal value.

That is why when we come together each of our voices has equal weight. In a rapidly changing and increasingly challenging world this has inestimable value. Especially at this time when multilateralism can be seen to be under threat and nationalism and narrow self-interest are on the rise.

In our current environment as well as throughout its history I firmly believe that the Commonwealth has stood as a beacon of hope and promise for a different and more equitable way for nations and citizens to treat each other.

Yet if we are to continue to inspire our citizens and demonstrate the benefits of international co-operation and collective action, we must not fall foul of those siren voices of self-interest and division.

Over the past few years, at a time of unparalleled crisis, the Commonwealth has chosen to stand united and striven to deliver for all our citizens. This choice has not always been easy, but it is a choice that we must all continue to make.

As the current stewards of this great body it is our responsibility to resist those who would seek to divide us so we can hand on to the next generation a Commonwealth more united, more vibrant and more equal.

The coming years will be tough. The challenge from the global pandemic will be far-reaching and profound and cover every aspect of our lives, from the economy to healthcare to political discourse and even to our families.

If we as a Commonwealth family are to successfully plot a course through the coming years it will require all of our experience, vision, prudence and passion.

From our inception over seven decades ago we have always risen to the challenges set before us. Whether in our decision at our founding to come together as a family in comity rather than animosity, in our actions to stand against the evils of apartheid, or our commitment to protect all our environments through our promises in the Langkawi Declaration, we and our predecessors have united against the real challenges we faced.

I remain steadfast in my commitment to continue to make sure that the Commonwealth Secretariat is prepared to assist member countries as they face this new world. As we strive to rebuild from this pandemic and to regenerate our societies the Secretariat is ready to serve you and the generations that follow.

Acknowledgments

The Secretariat would like to thank all of our accredited organisations, member countries and other partners for all their work and support over the past few years.

We would also like to highlight a few of those who have made a particular contribution to the Commonwealth and the Secretariat.

We would especially like to thank Her Majesty the Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, who as head of the Commonwealth has provided unwavering support for the Secretariat, its work and its staff, over what has been a challenging period.

I would also like to pay tribute to His Majesty the Prince of Wales for his tireless support for the Commonwealth and his commitment to issues such as the environment, climate change and the sustainability agenda. I would especially like to thank him for his work on the Sustainable Markets Initiative and his support for Commonwealth countries on all these issues.

We would also like to thank in memoriam His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh for his longstanding and passionate commitment to the people of the Commonwealth and to the Secretariat. It is because of him that Secretariat staff enjoy the immense privilege of working in Marlborough House and his engagement and kindness to the staff of the organisation and to the many Commonwealth citizens that he met over many years will not be forgotten.

The Secretariat would also like to offer our warmest thanks to Nabeel Goheer, former Assistant

Secretary-General, who recently left the Secretariat after 10 years of dedicated and devoted service.

We are also served by special envoys and champions who work voluntarily for the Commonwealth for the common good and on behalf of the Secretary-General.

These include:

Justin Mundy, Special Envoy for Climate Change, Environment and Socio-Economic Affairs

Dr Richard Sezibera, Special Envoy for Health and Education

Professor Prajapati Trivedi, Special Envoy for SDG Implementation

Anne Wafula-Strike, Champion for Equality in Sport

Pamella Zaballa and **Melissa Morbeck** of the NO MORE Foundation

The Secretary-General would also like to thank the 54 member countries of the Commonwealth, their parliamentarians, staff and citizens for their continued support of Secretariat and our work on your behalf.

Finally, none of this work would be possible without the dedication and passion of the fantastic staff at the Secretariat who, during a particularly trying period have continued to delivered so many projects, programmes and initiatives in service of our great organisation.



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