

# Commonwealth Declaration for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

2022–2030



The Commonwealth

1. At their June 2022 meeting in Rwanda, the Commonwealth Heads of Government affirmed and strengthened their commitment to accelerate gender equality by continuing to take achievable, comprehensive and meaningful actions within their own countries and to strengthen their contribution to global efforts, through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
2. Heads reflected on the far-reaching implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender equality. Women and girls have been disproportionately affected by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has deepened pre-existing inequalities that perpetuate multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. This is demonstrated by escalating rates of gender-based violence, including increased rates of child, early, and forced marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting, as well as women's and girls' under-representation in decision-making processes, including in conflict, crisis and humanitarian settings. The burden of unpaid care and domestic work has also increased for women and girls, despite women making up the vast majority of frontline health care workers. They have also been disproportionately affected by economic crisis, with women and girls more likely to have lost their employment and to have experienced less access to essential health services and education. In light of this, heads acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to roll back decades of gender equality gains.
3. Heads acknowledged that gender equality and inclusion is necessary to enable full, equal and meaningful participation by women and girls in all areas of social, political and economic life. While considerable efforts have been made, progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls has been slow, and the pandemic represents a further impediment. Heads remain concerned that particularly in situations of poverty, women and girls have the least access to food, health, education and land ownership, as well as the least access to capital, training and opportunities for employment and other needs that would raise the standard of living for women, girls, their communities and societies. They reiterated that all forms of discrimination and violence against all women and girls violates human rights and respect for human dignity

and hampers growth in the prosperity of societies, communities and families. To ensure women can fully achieve their potential in the service of their countries and of humanity, Heads called on all Commonwealth countries to ratify and strengthen support to implement the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Heads resolved to address systemic barriers to women's full and equal participation in the economy by taking a gender-responsive approach to the development of trade and other related policies. In order to successfully break down the barriers to trade facing women, countries need to prioritise gender within their trade and economic agendas, including by supporting data-gathering initiatives relating to trade and gender and sharing best practices, such as through SheTrades Outlook, and by addressing the gender digital divide.

leadership and representation can be strengthened by providing training and mentoring opportunities for potential women candidates, removing discriminatory practices in campaigns and elections, and developing action plans to ensure women candidates and voters are free from violence, harassment and discrimination, including online. Heads committed to investigate the benefits of voluntary or legislative quotas or targets for women in the political, public and private sectors. Economic empowerment principles based on equity and justice will contribute significantly towards gender equality. As such, Heads committed to increasing women's participation in all levels of the decision-making process and leadership, improving women and girls' access to education, eliminating violence against women and girls, ensuring equal pay for work of equal value, and valuing and recognising women's unpaid care and domestic work.

4. Convinced that the establishment of the new international economic order based on equity and justice must contribute significantly towards the promotion of gender equality, Heads committed to increasing women's access to decision-making and leadership by working to increase the proportion of women candidates standing for public office. Women's
5. Heads affirmed their unwavering commitment to strongly encourage access to a minimum 12 years of free quality education for girls, and celebrated progress made thus far. They committed to urgent action to ensure the right to education for marginalised girls in vulnerable circumstances. Heads commended

- the member states that now provide bursaries to girls pursuing higher learning at tertiary levels. Heads committed to build and upgrade education facilities that are child-, disability-, and gender-responsive and provide safe, inclusive, accessible and effective learning environments for all, which are free from violence. Heads committed to move away from measuring gender parity, and towards wider gender equality in education, understanding and addressing the barriers that stop women and girls from accessing education throughout their lifetime. Heads committed to end discriminatory policies and practices such as exclusion of pregnant or married girls from school.
6. Heads committed to ensure universal health coverage for all women and girls in the Commonwealth. Heads committed to build on the call of the 2018 Commonwealth Women's Forum (CWF), to 'implement and uphold comprehensive quality Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for all women and young people and ensure universal health coverage, ensuring that by 2030 women and young people have universal access to sexual and reproductive health care services, including for family planning, information and education, with relevant data collection, review and follow-up' – with further progress including improved access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education.
7. Heads acknowledged the gendered impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, and committed to drive forward inclusive and gender-responsive solutions within national action plans across mitigation, adaptation and resilience across the Commonwealth.
8. To ensure action is sustained, collaboration across nations enhanced and best practice shared, Heads committed to mobilising technical and financial resources for gender equality at all levels and reporting on progress towards gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls at the next CHOGM.
9. Heads requested the Chair in Office of CHOGM with the support of the Commonwealth Secretariat to bring this Declaration to the attention of member countries, relevant international organisations, including the United Nations system, regional entities and other stakeholders as the Commonwealth's commitments to Beijing +25 in 2020 to 2030.

10. Heads invited members of civil society, non-government organisations, private sector, academia and development partners to support member countries in accelerating the realisation of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the Commonwealth and beyond.

**Commonwealth Secretariat  
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