

The Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan 2025–2030

Building a More Resilient Commonwealth



The Commonwealth

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Foreword



We are living through a time of profound disruption: shrinking trust in institutions, rising geopolitical tensions, steep inflation, crushing debt and the existential threat of climate change. These challenges affect us all, but they are felt most sharply by those with the least capacity to respond.

This is the moment for the Commonwealth to show both its relevance and its strength.

This Strategic Plan sets out how the Secretariat will focus its work over the next five years. It is not about doing more for the sake of it: it is about doing what matters for Commonwealth countries and their citizens, and doing it better. We will focus on helping our member countries build stronger democracies and more resilient economies, and support them in finding better ways to protect their people and the planet. We will pay particular attention to the needs of small and vulnerable states.

We will continue to recognise women and young people at the heart of what we do. We will work differently and more closely with the whole Commonwealth family: member countries, civil society and Commonwealth Accredited Organisations. We will engage the private sector, international organisations and philanthropists much more intensively as we expand our capabilities to deliver on our mission and deliver tangible benefits on the issues that matter most to our members.

This Plan aims to ensure that the Commonwealth remains relevant to the 2.7 billion people of our member countries. The challenges are complex and immense, but our determination to succeed is boundless. Together, we must move forward with purpose, with courage and with an unshakable commitment to a Commonwealth that truly thrives.

Let's get to work.

*The Hon. Shirley Botchwey
Secretary-General of the Commonwealth*

Acronyms

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CCG	Commonwealth Communicators Group
CFAMM	Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting
CFTC	Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CMAG	Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group
CSSO(s)	Commonwealth Small States Office(s)
EBR	extra budgetary resource
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LDC	least developed country
MEL	monitoring, evaluation and learning
MSME	micro, small and medium-sized enterprise
PDD	project design document
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	small island developing states
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
WTO	World Trade Organization

Executive Summary

The Strategic Plan 2025–2030 sets the direction for the Commonwealth Secretariat at a time of overlapping challenges within our member countries.

Strategic context

Around the world, trust in our institutions is declining amid rising nationalism, disinformation and stalling economic growth. Economic instability, debt and disruptions in global trade patterns threaten growth and quality of life, especially in smaller countries. Climate change disproportionately impacts vulnerable countries, worsening inequality and displacement.

Young people, who make up nearly 60 per cent of the Commonwealth population, face barriers to economic and political participation. The digital divide is growing, despite rapid growth in the sector globally. Persistent gender inequality limits the ability of Commonwealth societies and economies to realise the potential of all.

Guiding principles

The Secretariat has historically capitalised on its convening role, trust-based relationships and diplomatic and technical knowledge to support member countries. In an age of overlapping crises and challenges, we must use these advantages more effectively and in a more focused manner to accelerate positive transformation throughout our member countries.

The way forward includes sharper prioritisation, improved internal processes, greater use of the Commonwealth's strengths and an improved focus on impact. However, we will have to balance our bold ambitions with available capacity and resources.

Strategic direction

In response to calls from member countries for more targeted and focused support, this Strategic Plan prioritises, and is structured around, three 'pillars':

- **democratic resilience**, through inclusive governance
- **economic resilience**, through equitable access and stronger market participation
- **environmental resilience**, through climate, oceans and energy initiatives and sustainable natural resource management.

Recognising that social inclusion is essential to resilience, the Plan envisions empowering and supporting women and young people throughout our work. It includes a new focus on partnerships with international organisations and Commonwealth Accredited Organisations, to help address the needs of member countries in areas like education and health. Finally, the needs of small and vulnerable countries will inform every aspect of our work.

Strategic accelerators

This Strategic Plan identifies three key accelerators for the transformational change we need.

1. **A modern, responsive Secretariat** with the right skills, sustainable funding and strong governance.
2. **Strategic partnerships** across member countries, private sector and development partners.
3. **Harnessing emerging technologies**, including AI and digital tools.

Performance enablers

The success of this strategic plan depends on key performance enablers, including the following.

- The implementation of a **new, robust monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) system** to track and report performance and outcomes, building a strong evaluation culture and ensuring that lessons learned feed into future programme designs and strategies.
- **A new approach to communications** that builds and leverages the Commonwealth's strong brand while also ensuring stakeholder trust and confidence.
- **More effective partnerships** both within the Commonwealth and with other international bodies to help address challenges outside the Secretariat's core areas of focus.
- **Rigorous risk management** to identify and mitigate challenges early, safeguarding delivery.

Implementation pathways & financial sustainability

To deliver the new Strategic Plan and ensure financial sustainability over the strategic period of five years, the Secretariat will pursue three complementary implementation pathways. These pathways will, respectively:

- provide a more explicit focus on core mandates
- enable new delivery mechanisms
- strengthen internal efficiency and governance, while fostering a more integrated organisational culture.

The resource requirements for each pathway will be contained within the forecasted revenue: accessing the declining reserve funds, as was allowed in previous years, will be avoided. The Secretariat will embark on initiatives to attract additional resources through diligent partnerships and collaborations. Savings gained through improved efficiency and rationalisation will be ploughed back into programme delivery to member countries.

Strategic Context

Introduction

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of equal sovereign states united by shared values and commitment to improving lives. Guided by the Commonwealth Charter, it promotes peace, prosperity and free and democratic societies through co-operation and solidarity. The Commonwealth Secretariat, as the main intergovernmental organisation of its member countries, plays a central role in supporting member countries' efforts to advance this mission.

The Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2025–2030 lays out the Secretariat's intentions to catalyse greater resilience across the Commonwealth in the next five years.

Horizon scanning: Resilience in the Commonwealth

Since 2015, the global development community has worked towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. However, progress is only 'on track' against around 35 per cent of these goals. Many member countries are struggling to recover from overlapping political, economic, environmental and public health crises, and are working to overcome other structural vulnerabilities and socio-economic challenges.

Several global trends, identified below, have shaped the design of this Strategic Plan, and will continue to inform its implementation over the next five years.

Erosion of rules-based governance and public trust

Trust in democratic rules and institutions is declining globally. Misinformation and deliberate disinformation are making people more suspicious and divided. The reputation of the Commonwealth as a bastion of democracy is diminishing.

Rising economic instability and vulnerability

Commonwealth countries at all income levels face challenges in delivering shared prosperity. For many, high debt, limited productive capacity, economic instability and costly investment financing hinder

economic diversification. Trade reconfiguration and supply chain disruptions add pressure. Trade barriers persist. Larger economies are reshoring production and using trade policy as a geopolitical tool, risking the marginalisation of smaller countries. Nevertheless, opportunities are growing for intra-Commonwealth trade and investment, South–South trade, digital commerce and green supply chains.

Increased climate vulnerability

Environmental risks and vulnerabilities are growing. Climate change is a key driver of this growth, bringing more frequent natural disasters, droughts, rising sea levels and loss of biodiversity. These pressures worsen inequalities and lead to displacement, food insecurity and economic instability. Commonwealth member countries are faced with difficult policy choices, with limited fiscal space to invest in net-zero infrastructure and social systems. Small and low-income countries and coastal communities bear a disproportionate share of these risks.

Demographic shifts

Member countries, particularly those with large youth populations, face rising economic and social challenges, putting pressure on social services and creating increased division between generations. Young people face exclusion from decision-making, high unemployment, limited digital access, and climate impacts, while new technologies transform industries and threaten jobs for those lacking digital and other skills.

Persistent gender imbalance

Despite the global consensus on gender equality, women continue to face social, structural and legal barriers that limit their access to economic resources and leadership roles in business and public life. Women are overrepresented in the informal economy and underrepresented in the formal economy, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, restricting their economic security as well as their opportunities to influence policy and social change.

SWOT analysis of the Commonwealth Secretariat

The below SWOT analysis highlights the Commonwealth's unique strengths and opportunities, including its global membership, shared values and potential to harness emerging technologies. It also recognises internal weaknesses such as resource constraints and fragmented partnerships, and external threats from a shifting multilateral landscape and increasing competition for influence.

Key lessons for the new Strategic Plan

A number of lessons, drawn from evaluations and reviews and detailed in Table 2, have informed the development of this Strategic Plan.

Guiding principles

The Strategic Plan applies Commonwealth Charter principles¹ in alignment with evidence-based approaches to building resilience, as laid out in Table 3.

Participatory strategic planning process

This Strategic Plan was informed by evidence reviews, internal workshops and consultations with member countries and Commonwealth partners to ensure ownership among key stakeholders, ensuring its relevance and effectiveness. Horizon scanning and internal SWOT reviews informed the context, risk identification and required reforms.

1 Commonwealth Secretariat (2013), *The Commonwealth Charter*. <https://thecommonwealth.org/charter>

Table 1: Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis of the Commonwealth Secretariat in 2025

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse global membership with shared values and heritage • Strong brand linked to democracy, rule of law and support for small states • Tailored technical support with deep contextual understanding • Effective conflict prevention through high-level diplomacy • Lean, agile bureaucracy 	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overextended portfolio due to weak strategic prioritisation • Disconnect between political and programme management • Declining voluntary contributions limit resources • Fragmented partnerships and underuse of networks • Limited capacity to attract new partners and funding • No dedicated structure for resource mobilisation
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage the Commonwealth advantage for economic growth • Harness emerging technologies to enhance services • Build on widespread support for democratic principles • Tap into a diverse and youthful talent pool • Expand pragmatic co-operation across member states 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erosion of multilateralism and rules-based governance • Public distrust reducing stakeholder engagement • Rising competition for influence and resources • Crowded diplomatic and development space, risking duplication

Table 2: Key lessons, and their implications, for the new Strategic plan

Lesson	Implications for new Strategic Plan
Prioritise impact through scale, reach and/or depth of results: connected and deep long-term interventions increase the potential for impact in response to member countries' needs.	Country-targeted action must be sustainable and effective in building institutional resilience and enabling policy changes. Leverage Comsec's convening and consensus-building to influence global policies and catalyse scaled-up, multi-country solutions. A more focused Strategic Plan will allow delivery of a narrower programme of work at greater scale.
Build on our brand value, trust-based relationships and core assets: our key added value lies in our trusted position, broad reach and access to expertise drawn from similar contexts.	These assets must be fortified and leveraged effectively to safeguard the Commonwealth's value and relevance.
Align ambition and capabilities with the need for transformational action and reform: programme targets and measures of success must align with resource capabilities and address the need to sustain engagement to contribute to impact.	To be a credible and effective partner we must be realistic about what we can do, taking decisive actions to align resources and target-setting while ensuring that our capabilities are aligned with our strategic objectives.
Evidence gaps: evaluations have identified a significant gap in outcome and impact measures and external validation for the Secretariat's value proposition and comparative advantages.	Build a stronger evidence base for strategic approaches and impact measures to support flexibility to adapt in response to new information and the changing external environment.
Better communicate what we do: there is insufficient detail and transparency in reporting to our stakeholders, including on fund use, impact and on where and how we work.	New monitoring, evaluation and learning strategies will aim to assess results more effectively and support clear and targeted communications to stakeholders. Embedding a culture of transparency will facilitate stronger and more trusted partnerships within the Commonwealth ecosystem.
Need to improve problem analysis and intervention design: while being responsive to member countries, interventions must have clearly developed and politically aware programme/project designs that align with local institutional capacities, national and regional priorities and the actions of development partners.	We will strengthen our strategic foresight, programme design and project preparation to be more contextually relevant and adaptive, including incorporating lessons from improved monitoring and evaluation.

An end-term evaluation of the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan, along with the 2024 mid-term review,² provided important insights.

² Commonwealth Secretariat (2024, October), *Mid-Term Review Of The Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan 2021/22–2024/25: Final Report*. https://production-new-commonwealth-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2024-11/mid-term-review-of-commonwealth-secretariat-strategic-plan-2021-25_lr.pdf

Table 3: Guiding principles of the Strategic Plan 2025–2030, and how they will be applied

Principle	Application
Targeted & delivery-driven	Aligning activity to the Strategic Plan's desired outcomes with discipline, and tailoring interventions to target members' needs in a rapidly evolving development context.
Values-based	Guided by consensus and common action, mutual respect, inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, legitimacy and responsiveness.
Inclusive	Enabling intentional and equitable involvement of member countries, working collaboratively with partner organisation, amplifying the voices of our small countries and creating space for women and young people.
Problem-driven, adaptive & transformational	Our resilience work will address root causes by strengthening systems to recover, adapt and transform in response to shocks. Using an adaptive approach, we will identify systemic obstacles, design responses that minimise trade-offs and create opportunities to capture emerging benefits.
Risk-aware, responsive	Resilience requires a systematic approach to identifying, managing and monitoring risks, assumptions, challenges and opportunities, while adapting programmes as needed.

Strategic Direction by 2030

Vision

A democratic, prosperous and environmentally sustainable Commonwealth underpinned by shared resilience, collaboration and connectedness.

Mission

To support Commonwealth members through the delivery of targeted and effective co-ordination, policy support, diplomacy, technical assistance and advocacy.

Value proposition

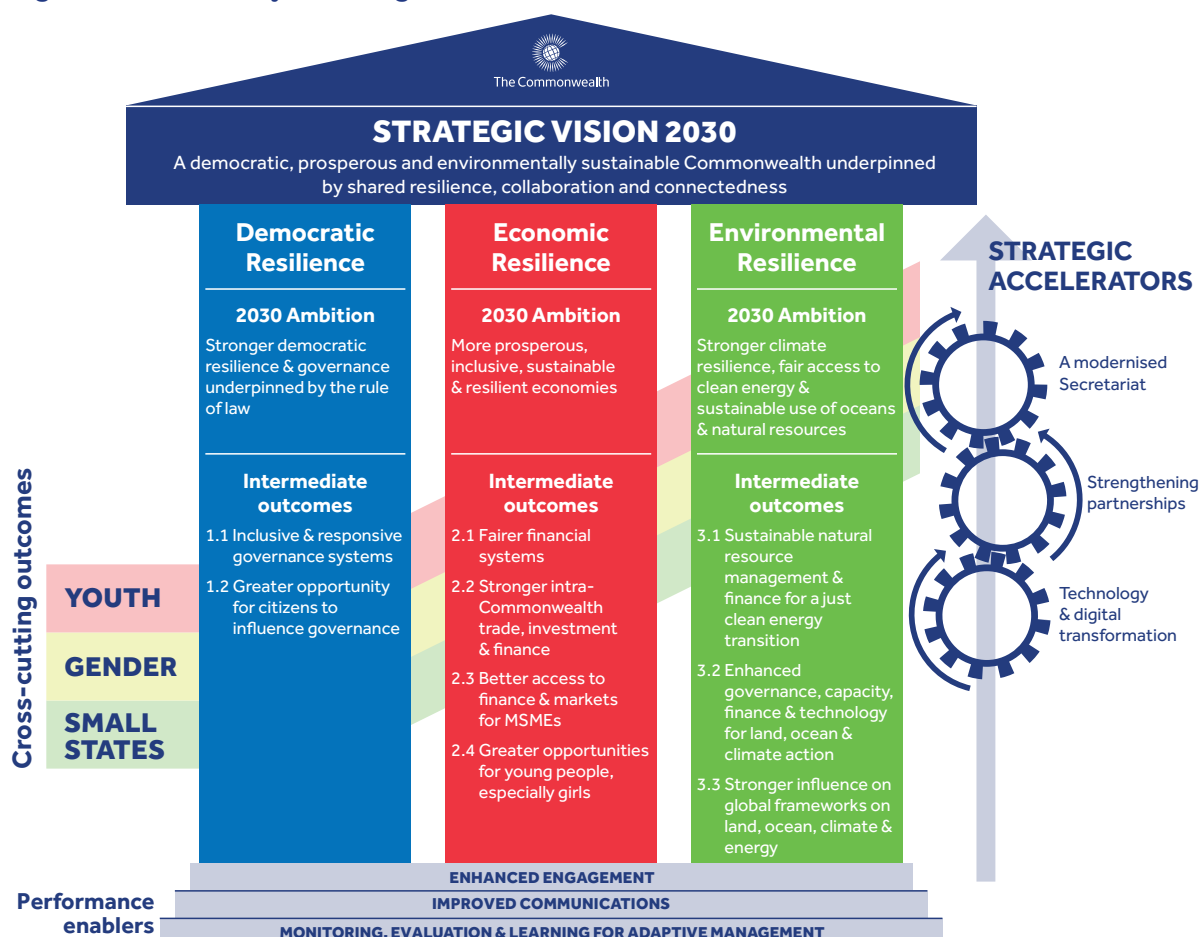
The Commonwealth Secretariat provides member countries with trusted, impartial support in diplomacy, governance and development. Drawing on deep experience in supporting political

dialogue, technical co-operation and consensus building, it delivers timely and cost-effective solutions that are inclusive, context-specific and aligned with the needs of diverse Commonwealth member countries.

Our theory of change

By 2030, the Secretariat will have contributed to creating the conditions that sustain strong, inclusive democratic, economic and environmental resilience across our member countries. We recognise that the path to achieving our ambition of transformative sustainable development is complex and dynamic, but we believe that the Commonwealth is uniquely well-placed to deliver that transformational change.

Figure 1: Our theory of change



We will focus in particular on the most vulnerable countries, young people and women. The Strategic Plan's theory of change informs the high-level programme strategy and its contribution to impact against each strategic pillar. Each programme strategy is developed in response to the needs of member countries. Each identifies our targeted 2030 intermediate outcomes, the Secretariat's approaches and contribution-to-change pathways.

Pillar 1: Democratic Resilience

The problem

Democratic governance is, in many member countries, weakened by limited institutional capacity, inadequate separation of powers, corruption, inconsistent application of the rule of law and weak accountability, including the inadequate inclusion of civil society. Trust in political systems, especially among young people, is declining, which threatens peace, inclusion and confidence in democratic processes. This lack of resilience undermines economic growth, frustrates policy efforts and disproportionately harms marginalised groups. Women and young people in particular face barriers to meaningful political participation.

Our 2030 ambition

By 2030, Commonwealth countries will demonstrate stronger democratic resilience and governance grounded in the rule of law.

To realise this ambition, we aim to achieve the following intermediate outcomes.

1.1	Democratic, judicial and electoral systems are more inclusive and responsive.
1.2	Commonwealth citizens, particularly women, young people, civil society and the media, have greater access and opportunities to shape governance at all levels.

Programme strategy

The Commonwealth Charter underpins the Secretariat's work to protect and promote democracy. With strengths in diplomacy, consensus building and convening, the Secretariat is well placed to advance peace, resilience and good governance. Building on its strong reputation in election support, trusted partnerships and access to political leaders, the Secretariat is implementing a whole-of-electoral-cycle approach that extends beyond observation to a full range of electoral support services, mandated by member governments.

Evidence-informed actions to address democratic systems

We will strengthen the targeting and evidence base of our interventions through a credible intergovernmental early warning system that tracks key indicators of governance, democratic integrity and fragility. This data will help identify priority entry points in at-risk countries, enable deeper stakeholder engagement and support co-created, resilience-focused interventions.

Guided by this evidence, we will work with multilateral, regional, national and Commonwealth partners on measures including the following.

- Technical assistance to address capacity and policy reforms and gaps in the rule of law, human rights frameworks, electoral systems and access to digital tools, including through leveraging Commonwealth networks for peer-to-peer learning, and with a particular focus on our small island developing states (SIDS).
- Preventative diplomacy, mediation and conflict resolution through capacity building, the Secretary-General's Good Offices and the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG).
- Sharper focus on foresight and analysis, working with the global analytical community and drawing on expertise from Commonwealth Accredited Organisations and member countries to identify risks and challenges and build Commonwealth and global consensus on democratic and rule of law principles.

Inclusive civic and political participation

We will work with civil society and governments to expand civic space, especially for young people and women, while deepening consensus around rule of law and good governance. Building on past successes with grants and knowledge support to local organisations, we will strengthen the political participation and peace-building role of youth- and women-led groups.

Who will benefit?

- Commonwealth member countries, their political leadership, institutions and women- and youth-led civil society and community organisations will benefit as improved and inclusive governance promotes peace, stability and inclusive economic growth.
- Sister and Commonwealth Accredited Organisations and other Commonwealth stakeholders will gain access to stronger partnerships, greater reach and opportunities for engagement.
- The international community, particularly neighbouring and partner countries, may benefit from enhanced regional stability

Impact

The programme will deliver targeted projects that share intelligence, capabilities and resources, while amplifying the voices of young people and women, especially those from marginalised communities. This data-driven approach will deliver more inclusive participation, stronger institutions and greater democratic resilience.

Assumptions

- Success depends on:
 - strong political commitment from member countries
 - the Secretariat's trusted networks and relationships
 - efficient use of funding
 - technical and practical skills in diplomacy, law, human rights and good governance.
- System-level reforms, backed by advocacy and capacity building, should strengthen accountability and democracy, while youth-led initiatives and intergenerational dialogue can operate with independence and in a more open political space.

Pillar 2: Economic Resilience

The problem

Our member countries recognise that if the transformative goals of resilience-building, democracy and shared prosperity are to be realised, more needs to be done to foster trade and investment across the entire Commonwealth. Many Commonwealth countries, particularly small island developing states (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs), face serious barriers to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while all face the challenge of generating sufficient economic growth to meet their citizens' needs and expectations. Limited economic diversification, high debt burdens, inadequate access to affordable finance, low digital readiness and climate vulnerabilities create structural, regulatory and digital obstacles.

These challenges are compounded by underrepresentation in global decision-making and inequitable access to finance, which constrain trade competitiveness, sustainable growth and private investment. At the national level, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), despite their recognised role in economic empowerment, struggle to access the finance, knowledge and technologies needed to drive growth and compete globally.

Our 2030 ambition

By 2030, we aim for member countries, particularly LDCs and other small and vulnerable countries, to have more prosperous, inclusive, sustainable and resilient economies.

To realise this ambition, we aim to achieve the following intermediate outcomes.

2.1	An international financial architecture that provides equitable access to finance and debt treatment, supports sustainable debt management and recognises the climate and other structural vulnerabilities of member countries.
2.2	Enhanced intra-Commonwealth trade, investment and financing for inclusive growth, with lower barriers to trade, delivering tangible benefits for member countries.
2.3	Improved access to finance and markets for Commonwealth micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly those that are women- and youth-led.
2.4	Young people, especially girls, gain stronger access to education and skills, digital tools, economic opportunities, affordable credit and innovations across the Commonwealth.

Programme strategy

Given the complexity of trade, investment and finance, success depends on monitoring global trends and risks through strategic foresight and analysis. We will strengthen regional and pan-Commonwealth economic co-operation by leveraging our convening power, enhancing our technical expertise, using data-driven policy and tools and building multi-country, member-led coalitions. We will increase our collaboration with the private sector and with Commonwealth Accredited Organisations. To help countries maximise opportunities in existing trade blocs, we will engage regional institutions such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), while also fostering stronger collaboration with the private sector.

Securing access to affordable finance and equitable debt treatment

The Secretariat's Meridian system helps member countries strengthen their debt management through better recording and forecasting. However, improved debt treatment also depends on sustainable policies and greater transparency. To expand access to affordable and equitable finance, support sustainable debt management and influence global debt policies, the Secretariat will take the following actions.

- Through multi-country coalitions such as the Bridgetown Initiative, and by forging global partnerships and campaigns, advance a Commonwealth position on access to affordable finance, co-ordinated debt relief and restructuring mechanisms.
- Co-ordinate with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank's Debt Sustainability Framework³ to enhance data quality and disclosure, reduce information asymmetry and support de-risking.
- Engage the secretariats and chairs of global initiatives such as the G20.
- Support a Common Framework for Debt Treatments to advocate for more equitable and improved terms for small and vulnerable member countries.
- Leverage the Commonwealth Meridian system to strengthen sustainable debt management, improve debt transparency and inform data-driven policies and strategies.

Enhanced trade and investment

The Secretariat will play a strategic enabling role with partners to help member countries through the following catalytic actions.

- Promote trade and investment across countries, leveraging the Commonwealth advantage by promoting standardisation, digital infrastructure development and co-ordinated policy reforms.

- Develop a matrix of broader sustainable and digital trade facilitation measures, leveraging insights from the biennial UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation,⁴ to guide Commonwealth action.
- Support access to and absorption of investment and the reduction of non-tariff barriers, including by sharing best practices, and explore options for deeper Commonwealth trade and economic integration.
- Provide targeted technical assistance to SIDS and other vulnerable countries to meet their obligations under the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement, using Commonwealth Small States Offices to deliver timely, context-specific support.
- Use the technical expertise of the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub to develop knowledge products and tools for climate-smart trade and investment policies, and target technical assistance to small and vulnerable countries.

Supporting the inclusive growth of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises

- Provide technical advice and build partnerships to expand trade opportunities and improve access to finance and emerging technologies for MSMEs, especially those led by women and young people.
- Enable pipeline development and policy de-risking for access to finance for investment and trade.
- Capacity-building by sector, market or value chain to help businesses take advantage of feasible linkages.

Who will benefit?

- All Commonwealth countries, with Commonwealth SIDS, LDCs and other small and vulnerable countries being key beneficiaries.

³ International Monetary Fund (2025), 'IMF-World Bank Debt Sustainability Framework for Low-Income Countries', webpage. <https://www.imf.org/en/About/Factsheets/Sheets/2023/imf-world-bank-debt-sustainability-framework-for-low-income-countries>

⁴ United Nations (2025), UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation. <https://www.untfsurvey.org>.

- Youth and women-led MSMEs will benefit from enhanced access to investment and opportunities to trade.

Impact

These efforts will enhance trade and investment practices and policies, streamline regulatory frameworks and improve data systems, and will result in increased intra-Commonwealth trade and investment, as well as economic resilience across member countries.

Assumptions

- Ongoing and coherent engagement of member countries, through our Working Groups on Trade and Investment, around an integrated and prioritised agenda and with commitment to trade openness and reform.
- Successful realisation of new partnerships with the private sector, regional trade blocs and national stakeholders. International institutions (the WTO, IMF, World Bank and international financial institutions) remain open to collaboration with the Commonwealth and receptive to advocacy tools.
- Global economic shocks (such as recession or supply chain disruptions) do not overwhelm progress or reverse reforms.

Pillar 3: Environmental Resilience

The problem

Commonwealth countries are highly vulnerable to climate change, energy insecurity, unsustainable resource use, pollution, ocean decline and biodiversity loss, all of which erode territorial, social, ecological, health and economic resilience. Many SIDS also face weak institutional capacity, making it harder to design and implement integrated policies.

Access to climate finance and technology remains complex and unequal, constraining efforts to build low-carbon, climate-resilient and inclusive economies. In times of disruption, marginalised groups – especially women and young people – are hit hardest, as limited assets and influence deepen inequality and social exclusion.

Our 2030 ambition

Commonwealth members, especially small and vulnerable countries, will have improved adaptive capacity and reduced vulnerability to climate shocks, expanded and equitable access to clean and affordable energy, and the ability to more sustainably manage their oceans and natural resources.

To realise this ambition, we aim to achieve the following intermediate outcomes.

3.1	Member countries have more sustainable natural resources management and access to finance to advance a just, inclusive, equitable transition to clean energy.
3.2	Member countries have more effective, inclusive and resilient governance systems, enhanced capacity, access to finance and technology for land, ocean and climate action.
3.3	Member countries more effectively participate in and advance inclusive land, ocean, climate, energy and other related international frameworks and collaborations.

Programme strategy

This programme will help member countries, and SIDS and LDCs in particular, to confront climate threats, human impact and land and ocean degradation, and to protect forests and nature. The Secretariat will use its multidisciplinary expertise to provide embedded technical assistance and mobilise finance for environmental resilience, with a strong focus on including and empowering young people and women.

Accelerate environmental resilience actions

The Secretariat will seek to expand and scale its flagship Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub, expanding technical services to member countries and delivering the following outcomes.

- Contribute to accelerating project pipelines and expanded access to global climate and environmental funds for member countries.
- Provide targeted technical assistance to enhance the capabilities of member countries in natural resource management, climate and energy reforms, including to regulatory frameworks, economic and fiscal policies and governance systems.
- Deliver institutional capacity-building support, including to MSMEs, women and young people in sustainable growth sectors, and to government agencies managing climate, oceans and energy resources.
- Engage investors and financing partners to support decarbonisation, increase renewable energy use and promote equitable growth in green and blue economies.

Promote and enable the global influence of member countries

Working with Commonwealth partners, the Secretariat will utilise its convening power and global influence to enable and support advocacy and collaborative actions.

- Encourage and facilitate the effective participation and influence of member countries in key global forums, promoting the voices of small countries, youth and women leaders and marginalised communities.
- Lead advocacy and provide thought leadership on climate, ocean, energy and natural resource management.

Who will benefit?

SIDS and other vulnerable countries will benefit from inclusive and responsive technical assistance that bridges the ocean-climate nexus, while enhanced support and coalitions will improve inclusion for the most marginalised and vulnerable populations and promote greater MSME participation. Other Commonwealth developing countries will realise a faster transition to renewable energy.

Impact

This programme will help small and vulnerable countries better protect their people and environments from climate change and resource degradation. By providing tailored technical support, strengthening governance and improving access to climate finance, the programme will drive faster transitions to renewable energy, sustainable ocean use, and greener economies. It will also amplify the voices of youth, women, and marginalised communities, ensuring that global solutions are fair, inclusive, and sustainable.

Assumptions

- There is demand from member countries for the Secretariat to support whole-of-government and intersectoral approaches.
- There is political will at a national level to prioritise long term climate, oceans and energy resilience building.
- There is sufficient absorptive capacity in member countries to leverage support, and to develop and implement bankable projects.
- Global climate finance remains available and accessible to small and vulnerable countries. International climate and biodiversity frameworks remain aligned with Commonwealth priorities.

Cross-Cutting Outcomes

Resilient societies depend on inclusion, empowerment and active participation. Where human, social or economic capital is weak, countries and communities struggle to withstand shocks. This Strategic Plan seeks to harness the Commonwealth's demographic dividend to strengthen resilience by embedding inclusivity across all programmes.

Our mainstreaming strategy prioritises young people, women, SIDS and other vulnerable countries, with social inclusion analysis integrated into programme design. Programme management will take a cross-cutting view, using data and lessons learned to drive improvements, close gaps and scale successful approaches.

Youth

Two thirds of people in the Commonwealth – more than 1.6 billion – are under the age 30. Too often, they are excluded from decisions that shape their lives and futures. Many face barriers to education, work, influence and digital access.

The Strategic Plan aims to bridge the digital divide by harnessing new technologies to revolutionise distance education, to connect classrooms, communities and capital, and to create financing instruments such as a Youth Entrepreneurship Fund.

Gender

The Commonwealth is home to around 1.35 billion women and girls. Despite global commitments to gender equality, women continue to encounter significant social, structural and legal barriers that impede their access to economic resources and political leadership. Underrepresented in the formal economy, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, women face challenges that limit their economic security and opportunities to influence policy and social change.

The Strategic Plan will address these issues by forging new partnerships and advocating for women and girls across the Commonwealth, with a particular emphasis on those in small and vulnerable states.

Small States

This Plan takes an integrated approach to strengthening resilience among the Commonwealth's small states. All aspects of the Secretariat's work will be tailored to meet the unique challenges faced by small and vulnerable members. Technical support will address specific capacity gaps, and system-wide connections will be forged to enhance the impact of development efforts.

Strategic Accelerators

Three accelerators are vital to delivering progress.

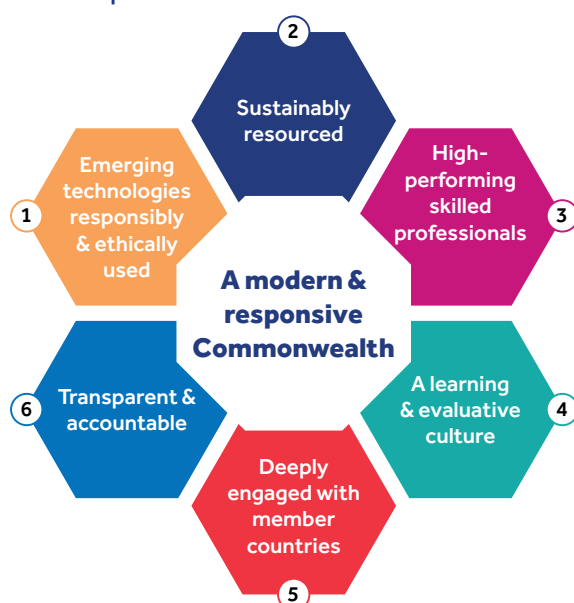
- A modern, capable and accountable Secretariat with sustainable funding and strong governance.
- Deepened strategic partnerships across member countries, the private sector and development partners.
- Harnessing emerging technologies, including AI and digital tools.

A modernised Secretariat

The Secretariat must be fit for purpose. The success of the Strategic Plan relies on the Secretariat's ability to restructure its internal processes and architecture, and to modernise programmes at a pace that matches our ambitions. We will reform governance, management and human resources to increase accountability, agility and innovation, and to improve capabilities and delivery.

A renewed relationship with the Board of Governors is a strategic imperative. The Board must be well-informed to properly carry out its oversight role: guiding strategic focus, holding the Secretariat to account and shaping the institutional future of the Commonwealth.

Figure 2: Six aspects of a modern and responsive Secretariat



The Secretariat will work with the Board of Governors to implement measures to achieve the following objectives.

1. Pivot resources in response to changing dynamics

We will consolidate fragmented funding arrangements to create a more coherent and flexible financial structure. This will improve transparency, generate efficiencies, strengthen programme alignment and enhance confidence among member countries and partners.

2. Build expert, high-performing and cross-disciplinary teams

We will embed learning and development, as well as a culture of continuous improvement, both as an institution and as individuals. With a strong focus on capability development, we will build high-performing, multidisciplinary teams with the skills and expertise needed to deliver our strategy. We will foster teamwork across programmes to exploit synergies and address complex problems in a consistent and co-ordinated way.

3. Reform governance to streamline processes and increase accountability

We will review internal processes and the way we work with the Board in order to modernise our institution. Through streamlined processes, we will be better able to function with agility and impact while empowering staff to better leverage their expertise. A more embedded culture of accountability will reconnect the Secretariat to the membership and help us drive improvement and delivery, including ensuring that our resources are used efficiently to deliver tangible benefits for member countries.

Strengthening Partnerships

The Secretariat will deepen and diversify partnerships with member countries, sister and Commonwealth Accredited Organisations, development partners and the private sector. It will use its convening power to foster dialogue, mobilise

coalitions and connect ministries with technical partners, innovators and global expertise for co-ordinated solutions across all pillars.

Figure 3: Six aspects of strategic partnerships and resource mobilisation



Success in resource mobilisation will also depend on attracting innovative funding, including from the private sector and philanthropic donors, aligned with Commonwealth strategic goals and values, as well as demonstrating that funds are being used efficiently and effectively to deliver outcomes.

Leveraging technology and digital transformation

The Secretariat will harness emerging technologies in two interrelated ways to strengthen institutional performance and deliver greater value to member countries. Established and new technologies will act as force multipliers for programme delivery.

1. Enhancing internal efficiency and governance

The Secretariat will introduce an enterprise resource planning system and adopt fit-for-purpose digital solutions to unify, streamline and modernise corporate systems.

Figure 4: Six aspects of leveraging emerging technologies



2. Acting as a digital innovation accelerator

The Secretariat will facilitate responsible digital innovation across the Commonwealth, promoting co-ordinated and inclusive digital transformation. Focus areas will include the following.

- Supporting inclusive digital governance through ethical, practical solutions that enhance democratic participation, civic engagement and public service delivery.
- Tackling structural digital exclusion, especially for women, young people and other marginalised groups.
- Building national capacity, particularly in small countries, through technical partnerships, shared resources, stronger digital infrastructure, interoperable data systems, sound governance frameworks and workforce readiness.
- Improving policy effectiveness by deploying data-driven tools, including artificial intelligence, to strengthen transparency, responsiveness and institutional performance through accessible and reliable data.

Performance Enablers

Monitoring performance and evaluating success

Greater accountability and continuous improvement are essential to success. The value of monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) is determined by how they are applied to improve performance and outcomes. Our MEL strategy has three core components, designed to maximise that value.

1. Create and nurture a culture of accountability and learning throughout the organisation

Over the next five years, we will build the skills and confidence of staff, member countries and partners to engage fully with the MEL system, including frontline data collection, robust analysis and transparent reporting on outcomes.

2. Effective risk management

The success of the Strategic Plan depends on clear identification and management of risks at strategic, programme and project levels. Strategic risks arise both within the Secretariat's operations and across the development landscape, and are closely monitored by senior management. Annex C outlines the main risks to the implementation of this Strategic Plan, and the proposed mitigation measures.

3. Establishing a robust MEL system

A new MEL strategy will target actions to enhance culture and capacities for a strengthened MEL system. At its core are the theory of change and the strategic results framework (summarised in Annex A), which describes the expected contributions of activities to desired outcomes. These will guide the selection of indicators at each result level. Data from the MEL system will support transparent reporting and inform course corrections to maximise impact.

Success for the Strategic Plan is defined by three clear milestones.

Year 1	A transformed, well-resourced Secretariat, and more partners engaged in funding or co-delivery.
Mid-term:	At least 70 per cent of intermediate outcomes show satisfactory progress in systems, institutions, policies and access to finance, technologies and partnerships; increased financing for Secretariat operations.
End-term	At least 85 per cent of intermediate outcomes reflect satisfactory progress.

Improved communications

A new communications strategy will support the delivery of the Strategic Plan, with a clear focus on strengthening the Commonwealth brand. The strategy will showcase the Secretariat's strengths and value proposition through storytelling; expand public diplomacy to connect with Commonwealth citizens; and highlight the organisation's impact on their lives. Communications will also promote thought leadership by sharing knowledge and solutions, align flagship publications with strategic priorities, and use convening power and goodwill ambassadors to extend outreach and influence.

The strategy will draw on past lessons and prioritise stronger engagement with member governments, including the Board of Governors. Clear, evidence-based communication, supported by MEL data, will strengthen confidence in results and support effective oversight.

Enhanced engagement

Better engagement with stakeholders is needed to deliver tangible and meaningful impact, recognising the importance of co-ordinated delivery through the Commonwealth ecosystem.

We will reform our approach across pan-Commonwealth, regional and national levels.

Table 4: Reforms to stakeholder engagement under the Strategic Plan 2025–2030

Commonwealth Small States Offices (CSSOs)	The CSSOs in New York and Geneva play a pivotal role in advocacy and supporting small and vulnerable member states to address their unique challenges. The Geneva office will be expanded, subject to resource availability, in response to growing demand, specifically for climate-related advice.
Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM)	CHOGM brings together leaders from all 56 member countries, and other Commonwealth organisations and stakeholders. The Secretariat will work with member countries to reform CHOGM to ensure that it is more visible and relevant to the Strategic Plan, and that it offers greater engagement opportunities (including through strategic partnerships).
Ministerial meetings	Commonwealth ministerial meetings will be reformed to maximise relevance, value and impact. We will explore means of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strengthening pan-Commonwealth engagement • enhancing participation • improving planning, delivery and outcome management • reducing meeting frequency • pursuing multi-sectoral collaborations • updating internal and external procedural guidelines • improving the governance of ministerial meeting decision-making.
Thematic centres of excellence	The Secretariat will explore the establishment of Commonwealth Centres of Excellence, partnering with interested members to bring together leadership, expertise, best practice and capacity building on priority issues. They will serve as research and innovation hubs, addressing gaps in capacity and knowledge, shaping evidence-based and contextually relevant policymaking and attracting sustainable resourcing through partnerships.
The Commonwealth and the Pacific	Pacific SIDS face unique challenges, including significant environmental threats, economic vulnerability and limited connectivity, that hinder development. Many Pacific SIDS lack adequate diplomatic representation, affecting engagement with Commonwealth initiatives. Options will be explored to enhance the Commonwealth's visibility in the region and advocacy for Commonwealth priorities, and to improve the Commonwealth's responsiveness to Pacific needs in line with the Strategic Plan. Options will include a Commonwealth office in the Pacific; the Secretariat will consult Pacific members on possible locations.
Grant mechanism	The Secretariat will consult members on a grant-awarding system to complement programme delivery and increase engagement with delivery partners. Grants will use unallocated CFTC funds, support delivery of the Strategic Plan's three pillars, and be used to attract co-financing from external partners. A dedicated platform will streamline applications and monitoring, improve fund management and enable evidence-based decisions. A strong risk framework will ensure that risks linked to grant funding are identified and managed.

Region- and country-specific priorities

The Strategic Plan defines the Commonwealth Secretariat's core priority outcomes for the next five years. However, the broader Commonwealth ecosystem has a much broader range of expertise and networks which are vital for addressing other aspects of the Commonwealth Charter and the SDGs, particularly for SIDS and other small countries.

The Secretariat will support the wider Commonwealth ecosystem, including sister organisations, Commonwealth Accredited Organisations and multilateral partners, to address these diverse needs. This ecosystem-driven model ensures that when member countries present requests, they receive expert-led, coalition-based responses that draw on our partners' deep expertise and networks.

In an era of fragmented multilateralism, this approach highlights the Commonwealth's comparative advantage: delivering targeted and credible solutions through domain experts and networks, while the Secretariat retains strategic focus and oversight.

Implementation Pathways & Financial Sustainability

To deliver the new Strategic Plan and ensure financial sustainability over the five-year strategic period, the Secretariat will pursue three complementary implementation pathways. These pathways will, respectively, provide a more explicit focus on core mandates, enable new delivery mechanisms and strengthen internal efficiency and governance, all while fostering a more integrated organisational culture.

The resource requirements for each pathway will be contained within the forecasted revenue; accessing the declining reserve funds, as was allowed in previous years, will be avoided. The Secretariat will embark on several new initiatives to attract additional resources through diligent partnerships and collaborations. Savings gained through improved efficiency and rationalisation will be ploughed back into programme delivery to member countries.

Pathway 1: Driving the core business

This pathway will ensure that the Secretariat refocuses on its core mandate by aligning resources with the three strategic pillars and cross-cutting themes. By prioritising high-impact activities and strengthening programme budgets, the Secretariat will ensure that it has adequate funding to support core programmes and projects for the strategic period 2025–2030.

Expected outcomes

- Demonstrate the adequacy of a minimum of around £4 million per year for the five-year Strategic Plan period to sustain the core programmes.
- Demonstrate the need to streamline administrative and programme staff costs.
- Demonstrate the need to improve the programme-to-budget ratio.
- Demonstrate the capacity to absorb and deliver on extra budgetary resources (EBRs).

Pathway 2: Implementing new initiatives

To remain relevant and responsive, the Secretariat will set up new vehicles for change – including a grant scheme, a regional office and centres of excellence (after due consultations with member countries) – and introduce a better enterprise resource planning system.

Expected outcomes

- Expanded programme impact without proportional budget growth.
- Enhanced proximity and visibility through regional initiatives.
- Stronger relationships with global actors and donors.
- Efficiency gains, savings and innovation.
- Enhanced staff motivation.
- Greater responsiveness to, and impact when meeting, member countries' needs.

Pathway 3: Improving efficiency and governance

This pathway focuses on systematic changes to modernise internal operations, optimise revenue management, streamline ministerial meetings (after due consultations) and rationalise staff travel. By enhancing communications, the Secretariat will increase accountability and responsiveness to stakeholders.

Expected outcomes

- Financial stability of core funds (zero nominal growth versus zero real growth).
- Reform of ministerial meetings.
- Reforms to CHOGM and Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meetings (CFAMMs).
- Automation and digitisation of financial, reporting and management systems.
- Rationalisation of travel and events budgets.

- Improved communications with stakeholders.
- Improved financial transparency and reporting to the Board.

People pathway: people and organisational culture

A successful strategic transformation relies on the full participation of the staff. The Secretariat will encourage a cultural shift toward collaboration and innovation. By motivating staff and fostering teamwork across disciplines, we will create an environment in which the other pathways converge, promoting unity of purpose and better overall performance.

Annex A: Overview of the Strategic Results Framework

The Strategic Plan 2025–2030 aims to enable the Commonwealth Secretariat to contribute to transformational change and resilience building in Commonwealth member countries. The Strategic Results Framework will set out how the Secretariat will assess performance and results of the Strategic Plan over its five-year implementation. The Framework provides a complete picture of results across impact, outcome, output and organisational performance. This enhanced approach aims to show not only what the Secretariat delivers directly, but also how it contributes to broader change, including through strengthening its internal capacity to perform. It will improve the Secretariat's reporting and accountability to member countries, providing the Board of Governors with credible evidence of performance and progress.

The Strategic Results Framework will use both quantitative and qualitative indicators to track outcomes. Quantitative measures capture the scale and coverage of the Secretariat's work, such as the number of member countries, citizens and institutions reached, and the extent of results achieved. These are complemented by qualitative measures that assess the depth and quality of change and the impact generated.

Level 1: Impact indicators

Impact indicators track progress and changes in democracy, economic performance, environmental resilience and gender and youth inclusivity across Commonwealth member countries. Because these indicators are shaped by global economic, social and climate dynamics, results cannot be attributed to a single actor; rather, they reflect the collective contributions of governments, development partners, civil society and the private sector. Indicators are drawn from credible global data sources and are selected to align with the Secretariat's strategic priorities and programmes.

Level 2: Outcome indicators

Outcome indicators measure progress against the strategic outcome priorities in the Strategic Plan.

They capture expected changes in the performance and behaviour of member governments, regional and global policy leaders, and relevant institutions and population groups. As with impact indicators, these outcomes are shaped by the contributions of many actors and by wider global trends and policies. The Secretariat's theory of change assumes that, while it does not control these outcomes directly, it can influence and enable the pathways of change and make a positive contribution.

Level 3: Output indicators

Output indicators track the specific products and services that the Secretariat delivers under the Strategic Plan, representing the direct results of its actions. In the Strategic Results Framework, these indicators consolidate project-level achievements across change pathways and cross-cutting themes. Detailed project indicators are maintained in the MEL system to support programme evaluation, learning and reporting.

Level 4: Indicators of organisational effectiveness and efficiency

Indicators of organisational effectiveness and efficiency measure the Secretariat's progress on strengthening its internal systems, resources and processes – the key enablers and strategic accelerators that enhance performance, accountability and delivery under the Strategic Plan.

Indicators will be developed alongside the strategic portfolio, following approval of the annual delivery plan and budget.

The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Strategy sets out the principles, approaches and processes for building a robust MEL system that addresses organisational needs and gaps, enhances data quality and coverage, ensures credible reporting and strengthens the Secretariat's ability to demonstrate results and learning across the Strategic Results Framework.

Annex B: Strategic Assumptions

We have identified several critical cross-cutting conditions for success which are particularly relevant to the activation of the strategic accelerators. These assumptions will be monitored closely, and deviations will inform the adaptation of plans or actions to manage emergent risks.

Political and institutional commitment

Member countries are committed to the Commonwealth vision and the strategic priorities on building resilience, and so will ensure the necessary sustainable resourcing and support the reforms needed.

Trust and access

The new Secretary-General successfully builds trust with and secures access to global leaders, enabling effective political dialogue and influence on policy agendas. Additionally, member countries continue to demonstrate confidence in the Commonwealth Secretariat's expertise and actively seek technical, diplomatic and programmatic support.

Partnerships in the Commonwealth system

Strategic partners value Commonwealth engagement and have confidence in the Secretariat's role and value proposition. The Commonwealth Foundation, the Commonwealth of Learning and Commonwealth Accredited Organisations have the goodwill, skills, reach and capabilities to support the Strategic Plan and deliver on member countries' other priorities. Regional and global partners will co-ordinate with the Secretariat, avoiding duplication and reinforcing impact.

Culture and capabilities

The Secretariat reforms at a pace that matches the ambition of this Strategic Plan with respect to its institutional culture and capabilities. The Secretariat can attract and retain the technical skills required to deliver on strategic priorities and establish a modern and fit-for-purpose institution. The Secretariat is also able to attract new funding

sources, including private and philanthropic actors, while safeguarding strategic focus and Commonwealth values.

Inclusive participation and innovation

Inclusive participation, especially by women, young people and marginalised groups, enhances the legitimacy, relevance and impact of policy, programme and institutional reforms. Empowering these groups to engage meaningfully in political, economic and environmental decision-making fosters greater equity, innovation and resilience.

Youth-led and intergenerational initiatives

Youth-led and intergenerational initiatives can catalyse systems change, strengthen accountability and drive inclusive, sustainable growth at all levels.

Annex C: Risks to the Implementation of the Strategic Plan

Risk of reduced funding and diminished relevance

Failure to meet member expectations could lead to lower funding, and to perceptions of the Secretariat as unfocused or no longer influential in global forums.

This risk is mitigated by aligning delivery plans with the Strategic Plan, strengthening performance reviews and providing clear outcome reporting to the Board of Governors and Heads of Government. Capacity building – including on gender mainstreaming, lesson-learning from ministerial meetings and updated partnership and project management frameworks – helps to maintain focus, improve delivery and demonstrate ongoing value to member countries.

Risk of member state breaches of Commonwealth values

Violations of Commonwealth values by member countries could damage the Secretariat's reputation and threaten its future.

This risk is managed by maintaining strong relations with member countries, early engagement with new governments and active monitoring by the Secretary-General's Good Offices. The Secretary-General and CMAG will respond to breaches, ensuring timely and appropriate diplomatic engagement in sensitive situations.

Risk of weak governance and compliance

An inadequate control environment could undermine governance, reduce confidence among auditors and member countries and damage the Secretariat's reputation and operational efficiency.

This concern is mitigated through a risk-based internal audit plan, comprehensive policies on fraud, travel, procurement and expenses, and the Commonwealth Essentials mandatory e-learning programme for all new staff. Governance is reinforced through regular senior management and committee meetings, quarterly Audit and Risk Committee sessions, a dedicated travel policy with automated approvals, and clear financial regulations and delegation frameworks.

Potential skills gaps and inefficiencies

Inability to recruit and retain staff with the right skills could hinder the delivery of strategic objectives and increase inefficiencies.

Mitigation measures include a streamlined recruitment process with an online tool, updated job descriptions, broader advertising, a dedicated recruitment team and continued effective implementation of a people strategy to attract and retain talent.

Risk of misaligned EBRs affecting reputation and coherence

Accepting EBRs, or delivering projects funded by them, that do not align with the Strategic Plan could undermine the coherence of the Secretariat's work and influence member countries' perceptions and behaviours.

This risk is managed through project governance and approval processes before work begins. Quality assurance is led by senior management, supported through quality reviews by professionals in our legal, portfolio, monitoring and evaluation, and risk and finance teams. All EBRs must be incorporated into project design documents (PDDs) aligned with the Strategic Plan and developed through established

project management and governance processes to ensure relevance, value and adherence to Commonwealth values.

Risk of partnerships misaligned with Commonwealth values

Partnering with organisations whose values conflict with ours could damage the Secretariat's reputation and threaten its long-term viability.

This risk is mitigated through mandatory project approval, senior management quality assurance, and adherence to our partnership guidelines. A partnership risk assessment form, legal counsel review of all agreements and due diligence on memoranda of understandings ensure alignment with Commonwealth values. Updated grants policies and procedures further strengthen oversight and safeguard integrity.

Risk of misuse or unintended consequences of emerging technologies

The adoption of AI and other emerging technologies to enhance Secretariat processes could lead to ethical breaches, bias or misuse, undermining trust and credibility.

This risk will be mitigated through clear policies, ethical guidelines and governance frameworks approved by the Board of Governors, with regular oversight to ensure responsible and transparent use. An AI Co-ordinating Unit and an AI Steering Committee have been established to provide strategic direction and monitor implementation.

Risk of cybercrime and data loss

Electronic data breaches, hacking, copyright infringement or other cybercrimes could lead to significant operational and reputational harm.

This risk is mitigated through web filtering, disk encryption, two-factor authentication, intrusion detection and robust firewalls. Anti-virus, anti-malware and anti-spam systems are kept up to date, supported by mandatory cybersecurity training and ongoing user education. Additional safeguards include security information and event management (SIEM) monitoring, USB data transfer

locks, privileged access management and regular independent security assessments with follow-up actions.

Risk of insufficient cover for corporate systems

Absence of key system administrators could disrupt essential functions such as travel and payment authorisations, causing project delays, higher costs and impacts on Strategic Plan delivery.

Mitigation measures include an emergency helpdesk for our financial management software, manual procedures linked to the business continuity plan, and a support list that outlines tasks that our IT division can cover. Training, an operations manual, and close collaboration between IT and finance teams ensure continuity, supported by programme management guidelines and monthly finance data backups alongside ICT backups.

Risk of inadequate business continuity

Without robust and comprehensive business continuity plans, the Secretariat may be unprepared for disruptions such as pandemics, terrorism or natural disasters, affecting its ability to deliver.

This risk is mitigated through organisation-wide and departmental continuity plans, regular testing, IT disaster recovery protocols and secure entry procedures. Cloud-based systems support remote working, while the Risk and Business Continuity Committee ensures that plans remain fit for purpose. Delivery strategies can pivot to digital products, access and the online delivery of meetings and capacity building when required.

Risk of data breaches and privacy infringements

Handling large volumes of data for AI implementation could expose the Secretariat to cyberattacks, litigation and reputational damage.

This is mitigated through strict controls on data use, guidelines for departing staff, adaptive insider risk management policies, monitoring of user activity and browser use for risks, and rigorous enforcement of security policies.

Disruptions due to unforeseen global shocks

Unforeseen global shocks – such as pandemics, geopolitical conflicts, economic crises or climate-related disasters – may impact the Secretariat's ability to deliver programmes, convene stakeholders or mobilise resources. They may also affect member countries' commitment and ability to engage effectively. This may result in delays to or reduced effectiveness of Strategic Plan implementation.

Mitigation measures include improved strategic foresight to track global trends and implications, improved member country engagement and responsiveness to changes in priorities and needs.



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