



The Commonwealth and Climate Change

November 2025



The Commonwealth



Message from the Secretary-General

The Paris Agreement remains one of humanity's most extraordinary collective achievements – a triumph of multilateralism, moral courage and shared interest. Because of Paris, global emissions are bending downward, unprecedented investment in renewable energy is being mobilised and – despite continued headwinds – the foundations for a just and sustainable transition have been laid.

But despite this progress, a decade on, the alarm bells ring louder than ever. The science is unequivocal: we are not on track to keep global warming within 1.5°C.

For the 56 nations and 2.7 billion people of the Commonwealth – from the smallest island states to the largest economies – this is not an abstract crisis. It is lived reality. Storms, floods, droughts, wildfires and rising seas are already reshaping our landscapes and our livelihoods. For 33 small states, including 25 small island developing states, climate change is not a future threat – it is an existential one.

We need to step up co-operation and action on every front.

That is why the Commonwealth will remain steadfast in our support for climate action and our defence of multilateralism. Because we know that no nation can stand alone against a threat without borders. The Paris Agreement works – when we work together. And the Commonwealth, with our deep traditions of partnership and mutual respect, is uniquely placed to help deliver the next decisive leap in global ambition and action.

Since the Langkawi Declaration of 1989, Commonwealth leaders have spoken with unity and moral clarity on the environment. Today, that legacy lives on in practical, principled initiatives – from unlocking climate finance and advancing clean energy transitions,

to driving sustainable land and ocean management, strengthening resilience and empowering youth and women as leaders of change.

But our mission goes beyond survival. Bold climate action is not only our duty – it is our greatest opportunity. It means better jobs, cleaner air, healthier people, more resilient communities, more affordable energy and transport, and greater prosperity and national security for all. It is the growth story of the 21st century.

So let us raise our ambition, redouble our resolve and renew our faith in the power of collective action. The Commonwealth will continue to work for our member states, and alongside our multilateral partners, to drive a just, inclusive transition that leaves no one behind.

Together, we can – and we must – deliver the future our people deserve: a future of hope, prosperity and resilience, built on the unshakeable foundations of co-operation and collective interest.

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

The Commonwealth and Climate Change

The Commonwealth has a long history of commitment to addressing climate change and supporting member countries in dealing with its adverse impacts. Collective political will to protect the planet for future generations has been explicit and robust, ever since the Langkawi Declaration on the Environment of 1989, when Commonwealth leaders resolved to act both individually and collectively on a programme of action on the environment and climate change.

In 2015, just before the UN Climate Conference in Paris (COP21) Commonwealth heads of government made a commitment to limit global temperature rise



below 2°C, while aiming for 1.5°C from pre-industrial levels. This undertaking was reaffirmed at COP21 and captured in the global agreement known as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

At the 2022 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), leaders reiterated their call for urgent action to mitigate climate change, reduce vulnerability and increase resilience, including enhanced participation of young people in climate action. This call was echoed at the 2024 CHOGM in Apia, where Heads reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the Commonwealth's climate change efforts through a series of declarations and established programmes.



Real problems, real solutions

The Commonwealth's multidisciplinary work to support member countries on climate change includes programmes on climate finance, youth and gender, climate law, energy transition, land-based solutions, climate-resilient agriculture, human rights and ocean governance. The Commonwealth also contributes to the global climate change

discussion by sharing experiences and highlighting key issues related to Small Island Developing States (SIDS), least developed countries, and other small and vulnerable countries.

Contact Uzoamaka Nwamarah, Interim Head and Adviser, Climate Change (climatechange@commonwealth.int) for more information.

Small States and Climate Vulnerability

Small states – many of them island nations – are on the frontlines of climate change, facing rising seas, extreme weather and economic instability. Thirty-three of the Commonwealth's 56 member countries fall into this category, and their vulnerability is compounded by limited access to climate finance and development aid. Recognising this, the Commonwealth has launched a suite of initiatives aimed at strengthening resilience and unlocking support for these nations.

Complementing the work of the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub (CCFAH; see below), the Disaster Risk Finance Portal is a digital tool designed to simplify

access to disaster-related funding and help governments better manage climate risks.

The Commonwealth has invested in data-driven planning through platforms such as CommonSensing that use satellite technology to support climate resilience strategies, particularly for small states such as Fiji and Vanuatu. This work is being furthered in partnership with the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs in order to utilise technologies like remote sensing, satellite imagery, earth observation systems and geospatial data to transform the way we manage natural resources, respond to disasters and plan for a more resilient future.

The Secretariat has also pioneered sustainable finance models through Commonwealth Meridian for Practical and Strategic Support (COMPASS), which enables small states to attract non-debt investment without compromising sovereignty. Meanwhile, the Apia Commonwealth Ocean Declaration, adopted at CHOGM 2024, commits all member states to protect 30 per cent of ocean areas by 2030 and safeguard maritime boundaries against rising seas which pose existential threats to SIDS.

To ensure long-term impact, the Commonwealth continues to advocate for use of the Universal Vulnerability Index (UVI), a standardised measure that captures climate-related economic fragility as well as other vulnerabilities, as a means of supporting small states with

access to timely and affordable finance by bilateral and multilateral development partners. This, along with the joint UN–Commonwealth Small States Advocacy Strategy and its Programme of Action (2024–2026), forms a comprehensive advocacy and technical assistance framework to help small states not just survive but thrive in the face of climate change.

Efforts have also been made to go beyond advocacy: the Commonwealth has supported small states to implement their economic policies by promoting domestic resource mobilisation through regenerative tourism and circular economies. The goal is to build the capacity of small states to sustainably address their climate-related vulnerabilities.



Contact Dr Thomas Munthali, Adviser and Head, Economic Policy and Small States. (t.munthali@commonwealth.int) for more information.

Unlocking Climate Finance

Climate change is hitting Commonwealth countries hard – rising sea levels, extreme weather and land degradation threaten lives and livelihoods. Despite billions pledged globally, accessing climate finance remains a major challenge, especially for small and vulnerable states.

The Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub (CCFAH), launched in 2015 and headquartered in Mauritius, helps countries overcome these barriers. By embedding National, Regional, and Thematic Climate Finance Advisers in government ministries and institutions, CCFAH builds long-term capacity to develop bankable projects, strengthen policies, and improve readiness for climate finance.

Using a hub-and-spokes model, CCFAH has supported 24 countries and expanded its reach across Africa, the Indo-Pacific and the Caribbean. Advisers with expertise in gender, health and climate finance enhance support for country-specific priorities, while a dedicated knowledge officer ensures effective sharing of tools and insights.

As of September 2025, CCFAH has helped secure US\$521.82 million in climate finance and trained more than 3,745 officials through over 170 capacity building initiatives. Its practical 'writeshops' guide participants from concept to proposal, addressing common challenges like limited technical capacity and data gaps.

Beyond technical skills, CCFAH fosters collaboration across sectors, ensuring that proposals reflect diverse expertise. Over 10 years, more than 3,200 individuals have been trained, including youth and negotiators.

Key resources like the *Toolkit to Enhance Access to Climate Finance* and the Commonwealth Climate Finance Essentials e-course distil key lessons from CCFAH's work. Specialised training in climate negotiations further equips member states to engage effectively in global climate finance discussions.

As demand for climate finance grows, CCFAH remains a vital partner in turning climate ambition into action.

Deployment of CCFAH advisers

Africa	Indo-Pacific	Caribbean	Thematic (global)
Eswatini	Maldives	Antigua and Barbuda	Gender
The Gambia	Fiji	Barbados	Health
Lesotho	Kiribati	Belize	Information and Knowledge Management (officer)
Mauritius (Central Hub)	Nauru	Dominica	
<i>Mozambique</i>	Solomon Islands	Grenada	
Namibia	Sri Lanka	Guyana	
Seychelles	Tonga	Jamaica	
Uganda	Tuvalu	Saint Lucia	
Zambia	Vanuatu		
Regional Technical Assistance: CRCFA, Africa	Regional Technical Assistance: CRCFA, Indo-Pacific	Regional Technical Assistance: CRCFA, Caribbean	

Note: countries and regions in bold have an active Commonwealth National or Regional Climate Finance Adviser in place; italics indicate that one is being recruited; in those not in bold or italics, Advisers have completed their tenures. Thematic advisors work across geographies to support national advisors to ensure that gender and health are integrated in proposals for climate finance. CRCFAs are Commonwealth Regional Climate Finance Advisers.

Contact: Uzoamaka Nwamarah,
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Change (climatechange@
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information.

See thecommonwealth.org/CCFAH

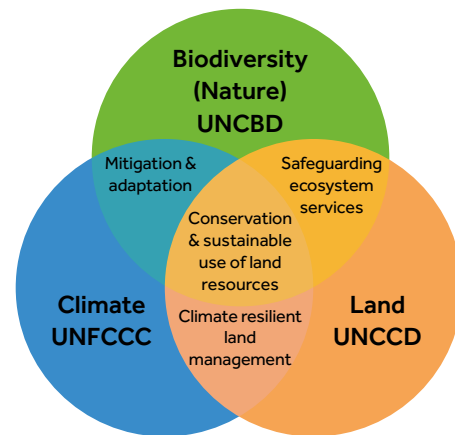
The Commonwealth Living Lands Charter

The Commonwealth Living Lands Charter, adopted by Commonwealth leaders in June 2022, aims to support nations to tackle critical, interconnected land issues: biodiversity loss, climate change and land degradation.

The world's land resources require a unified, global response to this triple threat. That's why all 56 Commonwealth member countries have united under the Commonwealth Living Lands Charter to protect our shared planet for generations to come.

The Charter is an agreement to take co-ordinated action on climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation. It

takes a harmonised approach to fulfilling the goals of the three 'Rio Conventions' (UNFCCC, UNCBD, and UNCCD), agreed at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, which address interdependent issues within the same ecosystems.



The 2019 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Climate Change and Land emphasised the urgent need for countries to implement their commitments together, thereby unlocking powerful co-benefits that help us achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals and uphold the 16 principles of the Commonwealth Charter.

The Charter's work is focused on six key thematic areas:

- climate resilient agriculture: ensuring food security
- soil and water: conservation and management
- sustainable green cover: protecting biodiversity
- carbon-neutral livestock: promoting climate-friendly practices

- indigenous and local peoples: supporting resilient development
- climate and health: addressing the nexus of these two crucial issues.

It is also integrating cross-cutting themes including justice and equity, gender, youth entrepreneurship, artificial intelligence, data and innovation.

Through working groups led by member countries, the Commonwealth Secretariat is implementing the Living Lands Charter with:

- evidence-based analysis and policy influence
- financing for implementation
- technical assistance and capacity building



- knowledge sharing and management.

Contact Mxolisi Sibanda, Adviser, Climate Change (livinglands@commonwealth.int) for more information

Unlocking Legal Pathways for Climate Action

As the International Court of Justice (ICJ) recently affirmed, climate justice is not a matter of charity – it is a legal obligation. Countries must not only halt harmful practices but also deliver reparations for past climate harm, including restoring ecosystems, rebuilding infrastructure and compensating for loss and damage.

To meet these obligations and effectively implement the Paris Agreement, countries need robust legal frameworks. The *Law and Climate Change Toolkit*, developed by the Commonwealth Secretariat, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change provides a global resource to support this effort.

The Toolkit helps governments, legal practitioners and researchers design, assess and strengthen climate laws aligned with their nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

It includes:

- a legislation explorer – a searchable database of climate laws worldwide
- a legal assessment module, to identify legislative gaps and recommend best practices
- lessons learned and case studies, to guide effective law-making across contexts.

Hosted on UNEP's Law and Environment Assistance Platform (LEAP), the *Toolkit* is part of a broader ecosystem of environmental legal resources. This integration enhances usability, ensures regular updates and supports cross-referencing with other toolkits on biodiversity, governance and pollution.



The ICJ's advisory opinion underscores the urgency of legal preparedness: states have binding obligations to prevent climate harm, protect human rights and co-operate internationally, even if they are not party to specific treaties. The *Toolkit* equips

countries to meet these obligations and translate climate ambition into enforceable action.

Contact climatechange@commonwealth.int for more information.

Commonwealth NDC Programme

The Commonwealth NDC Programme supports member countries to advance their nationally determined contributions (NDCs), also known as national climate plans. The Programme helps transform NDCs into realistic investment strategies and accelerates implementation towards climate-resilient, low-carbon and gender-responsive development, contributing to inclusive and sustainable growth across the Commonwealth.

Alongside thematic knowledge products, the Programme builds partnerships and fosters synergies to strengthen member countries' NDC implementation.

As an institutional and implementing member of the NDC Partnership, the Commonwealth Secretariat provides targeted support through initiatives such as the Climate Action Enhancement Package and the Partnership Action Fund. Results include the following.

- Antigua and Barbuda: feasibility study of a gender-responsive blended financing window under the Sustainable Island Resource Framework Fund.
- Eswatini: climate public expenditure and institutional review; strategy to enhance private sector engagement in NDC actions.

- Grenada: resource mobilisation strategy for NDC implementation plan (2023–2030).
- Jamaica: socio-economic and financial assessment of climate change impacts.
- Zambia: climate finance mapping and monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) of climate finance.
- Maldives: development of an adaptation investment pipeline (ongoing).

The Secretariat also contributes technical expertise on climate finance to global NDC conferences and youth engagement forums convened by the Partnership.

The Commonwealth Secretariat is an active member of the Africa NDC Hub, a collaborative platform



supporting African countries to deliver their NDC commitments, with particular focus on adaptation and private sector engagement.

At COP27, the Secretariat contributed to the Hub's flagship report, *Doubling Down on Delivering Africa's Climate Action Priorities*,

which reviewed NDC progress and set out policy recommendations to accelerate impact.

Enhanced Transparency Framework

The Secretariat is currently working with the Hub to strengthen member countries' capacity to implement the UNFCCC Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF). Transparency is central to building trust and accountability under the Paris Agreement. Article 13 established the ETF, which requires all countries to submit biennial transparency reports (BTRs) from 2024 onwards.

The Commonwealth Secretariat supports member countries to meet these requirements by:

- providing technical assistance on the preparation and review of BTRs
- supporting national systems for MRV of climate finance flows
- training and nominating Commonwealth experts to serve as UNFCCC technical reviewers.

In 2024, the Secretariat conducted a Commonwealth BTR review, analysing first-round submissions from member countries to identify good practices, common challenges and areas in which additional support is needed. This review now informs tailored assistance to strengthen transparency systems, link reporting to NDC implementation and mobilise climate finance.

The Commonwealth NDC Webinar Series

The Commonwealth NDC Programme's ongoing webinar series to share knowledge, showcase innovation and facilitate peer learning on NDC financing and implementation. Discussions focus on practical experiences, lessons learned, and inclusive approaches to climate finance. Past sessions have included:

- Africa–Caribbean Knowledge Exchange and Learning: Financing Mechanisms for NDCs in SIDS and LDCs (October 2025)
- Accelerating Inclusive Gender-Responsive Climate Finance: The Role of National Climate Funds (March 2024)



- Resource Mobilisation for NDC Implementation: Experiences from Commonwealth Countries (May 2023)
- Integrating Gender Equality into NDC Implementation (International Women's Day, March 2022)
- Developing Climate Financing Frameworks for Public-Private Alignment (April 2022)
- Climate Finance: From Landscape to Strategy Implementation (February 2022).

Contact Uzoamaka Nwamarah, Interim Head and Adviser, Climate Change (climatechange@commonwealth.int) for more information.

See thecommonwealth.org/ndc-webinars

Eliminating Emissions

There is an urgent need to transition to sustainable energy in ways that do not compromise the environment or social and economic development. Commonwealth member countries are responsible for approximately 29 per cent of global emissions, so they have a significant role to play in driving this transition.

1. Minimising Existing Emissions

We need to accelerate decarbonisation efforts, particularly in the petroleum sector, where a 70 per cent reduction in methane emissions can be achieved using existing technology. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas (GHG), with a global warming potential 28 times

higher than carbon dioxide over a 100-year timeframe. Resource extraction is responsible for half of the world's carbon emissions, and collective efforts are necessary to mitigate this impact.

By sharing knowledge and innovations, the Secretariat's newly launched Methane Action Group – part of the Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Transition (CSET) Agenda – aims to reduce emissions by the energy sector of the potent GHG.

The Commonwealth Secretariat has published the *Oil and Gas Decommissioning Toolkit* to support governments to develop effective strategies for decommissioning

oil and gas infrastructure in ways that minimise environmental and economic impacts.

2. The Renewable Energy Revolution

The CSET Agenda is supporting our member countries to work together to fast-track an inclusive, just and equitable transition to low-carbon energy systems. Key to this is the sustainable development of critical minerals required for renewable energy technologies, such as cobalt for electric vehicle batteries, lithium for battery storage and rare earth elements for wind turbines and solar panels.

The Secretariat has also developed a SIDS Clean Energy Toolkit. It tackles issues such as the small scale of many projects and lack of interest from international

investors; lack of capital in local financial institutions; and restrictive legal conditions for foreign investment. By enabling users to carry out cost-benefit analyses, build robust business cases for energy investment and accelerate clean energy investments, it empowers SIDS to harness the potential of renewable energy and increase their energy security.

The Geothermal Action Group, launched at the 2022 CHOGM in Rwanda and currently led by Kenya, is encouraging the development and deployment of technologies and innovations to accelerate the energy transition.

3. Supporting an inclusive equitable energy transition

The Secretariat has established an Energy Literacy Group to inspire future generations to advance the energy transition. Its series of children's books bring to life key issues in the energy transition and renewable technologies, foster responsible energy consumption among future consumers, and help close gender gaps by ensuring that everyone is empowered to participate in shaping a sustainable energy future.

The Secretariat has also set up a Commonwealth Youth Action Group, which focuses on technology and innovation and advocates for greater youth engagement in developing policies and regulations for sustainable energy and the energy transition.

Many countries' workforces are not yet prepared for the demands of the renewable energy transition. In Eswatini, for example, there is both a critical shortage of qualified solar technicians and persistently high youth unemployment. The Secretariat, in collaboration with the Government of Eswatini and its development partners, is supporting an initiative to upskill young people in solar photovoltaic installation. This programme exemplifies the Commonwealth's commitment to inclusive, sustainable and youth-focused development.

Contact Naadira Ogeer, Head of Energy and Natural Resources, (n.ogeer@commonwealth.int) for more information.

Ocean and Climate Change

Commonwealth countries are stewards of more than one-third of the ocean under national jurisdiction, including nearly half the world's coral reefs and a third of mangroves. Twenty-five member countries are SIDS, and 49 have a coastline. This puts Commonwealth countries on the front line of ocean-related climate impacts such as sea-level rise and inundation, extreme weather events, coral reef bleaching and ocean acidification.

It also means that they support many 'blue carbon' ecosystems that can provide nature-based solutions to climate mitigation and adaptation, and can greatly benefit from ocean-based renewable energy technologies. Ensuring that ocean and climate policies and actions are

joined up is critical, particularly in small states with limited capacity to implement new policies.

In light of this urgency, Commonwealth Heads of Government adopted the Apia Commonwealth Ocean Declaration for One Resilient Common Future on 26 October 2024. It sounds a clarion call for the restoration and protection of the Ocean in the face of severe climate change and pollution. Leaders agreed to

'Recommit to urgent, ambitious and collective climate action and mitigation, under the Paris Agreement, based on the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities in the light of different national circumstances, to put us on the trajectory for limiting global

average temperatures to well below 2°C above preindustrial levels and in pursuit of efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C'.

The Commonwealth Blue Charter (CBC), agreed in 2018, commits all 56 member countries to co-operate on tackling our shared ocean-related challenges and meet commitments for sustainable, fair, equitable and inclusive ocean development, protection and governance. The Charter of the Commonwealth provides the underlying principles for the Blue Charter, ensuring that the Commonwealth takes a fair, equitable, inclusive and sustainable approach to ocean governance.

At the heart of the Blue Charter are 10 Action Groups on priority ocean issues, each led by one or

Blue Charter Action Groups



more of 16 'champion' countries. The Action Group on Ocean and Climate Change, led by Fiji, works co-operatively with existing networks to improve climate adaptation and coastal resilience by taking action on ocean health and

sustainability.

The CBC's Project Incubator provides grants to support government-led proof-of-concept and pilot projects for ocean action and climate adaptation and

mitigation, as well as capacity-building through training, rapid assessments and the sharing of durable solutions. Projects that the incubator has supported include: building capacity for youth on ocean monitoring; enabling frameworks

for 'blue carbon' and nature-based solutions; the restoration of coastal ecosystems; and policy guidance for tackling ocean acidification.

To further support countries to access and raise financing, we have launched the *Commonwealth Guide to Blue Bond Issuance*, which describes how these financing tools can support sustainable blue economy, climate change adaptation and mitigation goals, and provides step-by-step practical guidance for governments on preparing, issuing and managing blue bonds.

Contact Dr Daniel Wilde, Adviser and Head, Oceans (d.wilde@commonwealth.int) for more information. See thecommonwealth.org/bluecharter



Climate and Health

Climate change, alongside the collapse of biodiversity, is recognised as the greatest health threat of the 21st century, impacting health through multiple pathways including death and illness from extreme weather events, disruption of food systems, increases in zoonoses and vector-borne diseases, and rises in non-communicable diseases and mental health conditions. Climate change fundamentally undermines the social determinants of health, affecting livelihoods, equity and access to healthcare and social support structures.

The Commonwealth elevated climate-health synergies as a priority agenda item for the Commonwealth Health Ministers

Meetings held in 2024 and 2025. During both meetings, ministers recognised that strong, resilient, climate-proof, environmentally sustainable, well-financed, functional and well-governed health systems are fundamental to addressing these challenges. Ministers concluded that to strengthen the link between climate and health and build more resilient health systems, the following actions are needed.

- Prioritise sustainable investment in health infrastructure to safeguard essential services amid escalating climate risks.
- Mobilise dedicated climate finance to strengthen health systems' capacity to prevent, withstand and recover from climate-related shocks.
- Accelerate access to finance from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the private sector, and to innovative mechanisms to support the implementation of health national adaptation plans, including technical support for project development as well as decarbonisation of the health sector.
- Build the evidence base, with the voice of small island states and other vulnerable countries

to be represented in IPCC assessment reports and other multilateral platforms.

- Advocate for improved application processes in the GCF, and broader conceptualisations of vulnerability such as the multi-vulnerability index.
- Establish robust governance mechanisms and foster co-ordination across sectors to ensure coherent and climate-responsive health action.
- Deepen collaboration with partners and elevate youth leadership to accelerate progress and innovation at the climate-health interface.

To support the implementation of agreed actions, and in alignment with climate resilience outcome 1.8's commitment to enhance



member states' influence in global policy making and climate negotiations, the Commonwealth is spearheading a critical initiative through the WHO-led Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate Change and Health working group. This initiative intends to provide essential pathways for ministries responsible for health, especially in small island developing states and vulnerable countries, to identify

and access funding opportunities at the intersection of climate change and health. This will, in turn, enable them to build climate-resilient health systems capable of withstanding environmental shocks while maintaining essential health services. This initiative fulfils Commonwealth commitments to support member states to build climate resilient health systems, and aligns with the landmark WHO

World Health Assembly Resolution on Climate Change and Health (WHA77) adopted by 194 member states in May 2024.

The Commonwealth's partnership with the WHO extends to supporting small states in enhancing digital capabilities for climate resilience through comprehensive digital maturity assessments. These assessments enable countries to identify capacity gaps and develop strategic digital health frameworks alongside sustainable healthcare delivery models. Seychelles and Zambia have successfully participated in this programme, demonstrating practical applications of digital health solutions for building robust health systems, with Kiribati set to follow this proven approach.

To foster knowledge exchange and sharing of best practices, the Commonwealth Secretariat is supporting the Government of Kiribati to lead the Climate-Health Working Group. This working group serves as a strategic platform for fostering multi-sectoral collaboration and identifying innovative partnership opportunities to address climate-health challenges across the Commonwealth community.

Contact: Dr Janneth Mghamba, Health Adviser, j.mghamba@commonwealth.int.





Human Rights and Climate Change

Human wellbeing and the full enjoyment of human rights depends upon a healthy environment. Equally, climate change, deterioration of biodiversity, habitat loss and desertification are immediate threats to the human rights of every individual in both present and future generations. These environmental harms jeopardise food security, weaken public health, exacerbate conflict and displacement, deepen inequalities, undermine development, threaten achievement of the SDGs and impede economic growth. Although the negative human rights impacts of environmental harm are felt by all, they are disproportionately borne by indigenous peoples, local communities, women and girls,

children and youth, the poor, and persons, groups and peoples in vulnerable situations.

Human rights are crucial to addressing environmental harm, as was acknowledged by the UN General Assembly in July 2022 when it formally recognised the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a fundamental human right, and called on states and international organisations to enhance international co-operation, strengthen capacity-building and continue to share good practices in order to scale up efforts to ensure a clean, healthy and sustainable environment for all.

Building on normative developments in international human rights law and international environmental law, the Commonwealth Secretariat Human Rights Unit provides contextualised support to member countries to integrate human rights norms into domestic legal frameworks for environmental protection.

Human rights-based approaches to environmental policy have great potential to effectively and equitably address climate change and safeguard biodiversity. The Human Rights Unit can also provide technical assistance to member countries for the development and implementation of rights-based approaches in economic, social, legislative, political and technological actions relating to environmental protection. This includes, for example, assistance for the development and



implementation of due diligence standards for businesses in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and support to integrate traditional knowledge and practices into inclusive decision-making processes with the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous

peoples and the protection of cultural rights.

Please contact GPD-HRU@commonwealth.int for more information.



Gender Integration for Climate Action

The Commonwealth's fourth priority on gender equality is on gender and climate change. This Commonwealth consensus-building for action recognises the link between gender inequality and higher climate impacts, and advocates for women and girls to be positioned as agents of change for climate action.

To support member countries to mainstream gender into their climate change policies and implementation plans, the Commonwealth Secretariat produced a report on *Gender Integration for Climate Action: A Review of Commonwealth Member Country Nationally Determined Contributions*. Its purpose was to

better understand how and to what extent Commonwealth member countries are integrating gender and social inclusion concerns into their NDCs, with a view to identifying prevailing gaps, entry points and opportunities. The report provides useful best practice examples and recommendations for strengthening gender responsiveness in the implementation of NDCs, under the following topics: prioritising gender in context; policy integration of gender; institutional co-ordination across gender and climate change; capacity building in technology; MRV systems, sex-disaggregated data and information; and financial resources for gender inclusion.

Building on this foundation, the Commonwealth Secretariat continued to strengthen its institutional capacity by appointing a dedicated Commonwealth Climate Finance Gender Advisor. They will provide direct technical assistance to member states in integrating gender considerations into climate finance policies, programmes and projects.

Commonwealth Heads of Government have also recognised the establishment of the Collaborative Network on Gender-Responsive Climate Action, a platform designed to accelerate progress across the Commonwealth. Through this network, member states are connected to practical tools, peer learning and partnerships that help translate commitments into action. Combined with targeted



training modules, technical support and youth-focused initiatives, these efforts ensure that women's leadership and knowledge are fully harnessed to deliver just, inclusive and sustainable climate outcomes across the Commonwealth.

Contact Uzoamaka Nwamarah, Interim Head and Adviser, Climate Change. (CCN-GRCA@commonwealth.int) for more information.

Trade Policy and Climate Change

Trade and trade-related policies have an important role to play within the broader spectrum of policy solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The Commonwealth Secretariat's International Trade Policy Section (ITPS) undertakes research and analysis on the nexus between trade and climate change; participates in policy dialogues; and can support members to develop climate-smart trade and investment policies.

ITPS has prepared knowledge products on:

- sustainable production and trade, focusing on the fisheries, forestry, cocoa, and textiles and garments sectors
- trade in environmental goods and services
- fossil fuel subsidy reform at the World Trade Organization
- plastics alternatives and their production value chains
- trade and technology transfer for renewable energy
- the implications of carbon schemes like the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism.

Contact Dr Collin Zhuawu
(c.zhuawu@commonwealth.int),
Head of ITPS, for more information.



Trade, Gender and Climate

The Trade Competitiveness Section (TCS's) report *Trade, Gender, Climate* addresses trade issues in the context of efforts to mitigate the impact of climate change on women in Commonwealth countries.

The publication offers new analysis to inform the development of gender-responsive, cross-sectoral trade and climate strategies. It demonstrates how national governments can make strategic interventions to integrate gender and women's empowerment issues into trade and climate dialogues through a variety of public institutions at different levels.

The report highlights the fact that women in business suffer significant – possibly disproportionate – losses from adverse climate events.

They also face a 'triple differential vulnerability' to climate change: they operate primarily in the agricultural sector; they continue to face persistent gendered barriers to trade, including access to finance and technologies; and they have limited knowledge of climate change threats and mitigation policies.

The TCS assists women-owned businesses to mitigate against these losses, as advancing women's economic empowerment is crucial to upscaling climate resilience and adaptation. Some interventions include:

- capacity-building for women entrepreneurs and women-led businesses on e-commerce as an alternative to brick-

and-mortar shops, which are susceptible to climate change disasters

- providing platforms for advocacy for women's economic empowerment, in partnership with like-minded organisations such as the International Trade Centre and the Islamic Trade Finance Corporation
- advocacy for gender disaggregated data as the foundation for more gender inclusive policies.

Contact Opeyemi Abebe, Adviser and Head, Trade Competitiveness Section (o.abeb@commonwealth.int) for more information.

Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda

Agriculture and food systems

With the increasing impacts of more frequent extreme weather events, adaptation and resilience are of crucial importance, especially to the food system. In this time of increased food insecurity, it is necessary but not sufficient to engage in global dialogues. Rather, these dialogues need to be complemented by policy actions to enhance the resilience and livelihoods of smallholder farmers, increase agriculture productivity, reduce losses in food production, and eventually deal with the food insecurity challenge. Digitalisation is enabling climate adaptation approaches that can enhance the resilience of agriculture and food systems against adverse climate impacts.

The Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda

The Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda (CCA) is enabling the policy environment for member countries to leverage digitalisation for agriculture and fisheries transformation. The Connectivity Agenda supports capacity-constrained members through policy dialogues, knowledge products and advisory support to position them to:

- better deploy digitally-enabled advisory services on drought resistance and short season seed varieties
- engage in precision farming to reduce the negative impact of agro-chemicals on soils and land



- benefit from index-based insurance services to cushion farmers against flood, drought, pest and diseases
- utilise alternative credit scoring solutions based on big data and analytics to facilitate access to financial services
- deploy smart tools to enable fisherfolks to respond to SOS alerts at sea when traditional storm models fail.

Contact Dr Benjamin Addom, Adviser, Agriculture and Fisheries Trade Policy, Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda (b.addom@commonwealth.int) for more information.



Engaging Youth

The Commonwealth Youth Programme has launched the 'Charting the Climate Future: Youth Voices on the Road to COP30' blog series to provide a platform for the next generation of young changemakers to share their stories, challenges and bold solutions for a greener future. Members of the Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network (CYCN) write two blogs per month to illustrate how young people are at the forefront of climate activism, and demonstrate a profound commitment to sustainability.

The Network empowers young people to translate climate change programmes into effective policies that have a measurable impact on youth wellbeing. CYCN has launched a SIDS and climate advocacy toolkit and convened climate advocacy

workshops, dubbed #Prep4COP, in Seychelles, Mauritius and Fiji. More than 100 young climate advocates received training on:

- effective climate communications
- resource mobilisation for climate projects
- UNFCCC and COP climate processes
- climate advocacy and campaigns.

In previous COP meetings, our youth leaders have:

- convened an intergenerational climate dialogue between the Commonwealth Secretary-General and young climate leaders that focuses on youth empowerment in the climate policy processes.
- co-ordinated policy advocacy workshops co-hosted by the CYCN and YOUNGO focusing on climate change education, training and action for youth-led climate action
- spearheaded side events to accelerate a green economy and drive youth entrepreneurship and employment; championed enhanced youth participation in NDC processes; and advocated for robust youth inclusion in climate decision-making at both national and international levels
- participated in partner organisations' climate events that brought together philanthropists and business leaders to discuss innovative climate finance mechanisms.

Commonwealth Youth for Sustainable Urbanisation, the Commonwealth Youth Council and CYCN also organised a strong delegation at CHOGM 2024 in Samoa, which marked the culmination of the Commonwealth Year of Youth and the 50th anniversary of the Commonwealth Youth Programme, and reinforced young people's involvement in devising solutions to complex global challenges. In 2022, at both the previous CHOGM in Rwanda and the World Urban Forum in Poland, CYSU participated as speakers and conveners of capacity-building sessions to highlight the role of sustainable urbanisation and intersectionality in the global action against climate change.

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Guided by the bold and visionary leadership of our Secretary-General, and under a new strategic plan, the Commonwealth Secretariat is intensifying its commitment to environmental resilience in response to the growing threats of climate change, biodiversity loss and energy insecurity. Recognising the disproportionate impact of these challenges on small and vulnerable member states, particularly small island developing states (SIDS) and least-developed countries (LDCs), the Secretariat is leveraging its trusted convening power, technical expertise and global influence to deliver targeted support.

Through its environmental resilience programme, the Commonwealth is accelerating access to climate finance, strengthening governance systems and promoting inclusive green and blue economies. By expanding initiatives like the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub (CCFAH) and forging new partnerships, the Secretariat aims to empower member countries to build adaptive capacity, reduce vulnerability and transition to sustainable energy and resource management.

This strategic shift is aimed at delivering impact, amplifying vulnerable voices and ensuring that Commonwealth solutions are inclusive, resilient and future-ready.

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