



**CHOGM 2011**  
PERTH, AUSTRALIA

# Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 2011

## *Building National Resilience, Building Global Resilience*

From 28 to 30 October 2011, the leaders of more than one quarter of the world's nations representing around one third of the world's population will come together in Perth, Australia, for the 2011 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).

CHOGM 2011 marks a pivotal moment in the life of the Commonwealth. Leaders will make decisions influencing the future direction of the Commonwealth and address a range of political, economic, social, and environmental challenges. The theme for CHOGM 2011, *Building National Resilience, Building Global Resilience*, reflects the importance of addressing these challenges at multiple levels: as individual states, as members of the Commonwealth, and as part of the global community. The resilience we build nationally, as an association, and globally will ensure that we can better meet the challenges and better seize the opportunities of today and tomorrow.

CHOGM 2011 in Perth is to be held at a time when the breadth and depth of the challenges we face as an international community is as great as it has ever been. A healthy global economy is crucial for the livelihood and prosperity of our citizens, but continued global economic vulnerabilities and turmoil are undermining confidence and holding back a return to strong, sustainable and balanced growth. The famine in the Horn of Africa, described by the United Nations as the most severe food crisis on the continent for two decades, is a profound reminder that food insecurity continues to threaten the lives of the world's vulnerable. Climate change, natural disasters, and other environmental challenges are making their effects felt. Social cohesion is under threat in many societies. Against this backdrop, the world has seen the beginning of a remarkable social and political transformation in North Africa and the Middle East, testimony to powerful human aspirations of democracy and the rule of law – values which lie at the heart of the Commonwealth association.

At such a time, building resilient societies, economies and countries is more important than ever. Resilience

allows us to prepare for challenges, respond to shocks, and rebound from difficulties. CHOGM 2011 provides us with a valuable opportunity to build and strengthen our resilience – as nations, as an association, and as part of the global community.

### *Building resilient states – Strengthening our economies, democracies and societies for accelerated development*

The Commonwealth membership spans all six continents and includes the world's largest and smallest nations. One of the association's great strengths is its capacity to bring countries together, to facilitate partnerships and to identify areas in which expertise and resources can be shared to deliver practical assistance which makes a difference to the lives of its peoples. CHOGM 2011 provides an opportunity to strengthen these partnerships and improve this assistance.

The continued global economic turmoil and weak global growth is affecting members of the Commonwealth in different ways and to varying degrees. Many of the smallest and most vulnerable nations have been hit hardest. There remains a risk that developmental gains in these and other nations will be eroded or reversed unless work is done in concert with others to restore global economic health. At CHOGM 2011, leaders will discuss steps to mitigate these risks and to deliver outcomes that address the needs of members, especially those most vulnerable.

Some of these needs, like food security, are basic but not simple. Members face issues of increasing demand, rising input costs, extreme price volatility, reduced agricultural land availability, and increased competition from non-food crop uses. Added to this, the impacts of climate change, natural disasters, and resource management issues continue to increase pressures on supply. We can work to combat these impacts by forging new partnerships, such as those which increase access to and sharing of research and development and technical expertise. The lessons learned from these approaches can help lift agricultural productivity, fight commodity price volatility, improve rural livelihoods, and build economically resilient communities better able to

meet future adversity. Enhanced productivity and market access for farmers, especially smallholder farmers, will not only improve food security at local levels but deliver other development benefits as well – reducing poverty through increased employment in communities where it is most needed and allowing savings to be invested in areas such as health, education, and social insurance.

Climate change is another challenge affecting all members of the Commonwealth and one that we must meet together. This will be especially important for those Commonwealth states most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, especially least developed states, small island states, and African states, to whom climate change can present the most immediate risks to sustainable economic growth and development, and who are least able to manage these risks. Rising sea levels threaten land in a number of Commonwealth states, the acidification of oceans jeopardises the biodiversity which supports marine economies, and record high temperatures, droughts and floods affect people's lives and livelihoods. Crop yields suffer also, reducing agricultural productivity and contributing to food insecurity. Dedicated efforts to address this issue will continue internationally, but as Commonwealth members we can also work together now to improve understanding of climate change impacts, to support clean energy, and to help develop practical and effective mitigation responses and implement priority adaptation measures. These could include diversifying food varieties to develop drought-resistant crops, and building government capacity to assess vulnerability, plan and deliver adaptation measures, and better prepare and respond to natural disasters.

In addition to helping us prepare for future challenges, Commonwealth partnerships can help unlock opportunities for development which already exist within our individual borders. Many Commonwealth members have vast natural resources and increased collaboration can assist in the effective management of these resources and the revenues that flow from them. Partnerships across the Commonwealth can help developing states build capacity in areas like macroeconomic policy and land and resource management. Well-managed mining, gas and petroleum resource exploitation can substantially increase government revenues and help ensure that these revenues have a positive and sustainable impact on both economic growth and human development.

The Commonwealth's own people are its greatest untapped resource. We can and must do more to realise the tremendous potential waiting to be unlocked in our citizens, especially women and youth who make up so much of the Commonwealth's population. Empowering women and youth will have a transformational effect on economic and social development. Commonwealth members can work together to mainstream mechanisms to improve gender equity, to identify and overcome barriers to women's participation and leadership, and to share lessons learned. With half of the Commonwealth's citizens aged under 25, we must ensure the association's relevance to youth, increase government-youth engagement, and enable young people to

play full and active roles in societies through better access to education and jobs. This will build the capacity of nations to develop economically and spread democratic participation.

Leaders must also pay special attention to the economic and development needs particular to the Commonwealth's small states. For many, the ability to travel and work in another country and to send money home is vital. Remittances are a key private sector source of development financing which contribute to the resilience of communities even through periods of economic downturn and recession – global remittance transfers account for more than three times the value of total global official development assistance. But the cost of remittances remains unacceptably high and continues to impede the ability of some of the Commonwealth's most vulnerable people to access food, health care, and education. We can reduce the cost of remittances through supporting the General Principles for International Remittance Services and by assisting the implementation of practical measures which improve transparency, financial literacy, and competition. Lessons can be shared from efforts like those in the Pacific, including the *SendMoneyPacific* website, to increase transparency in fees and charges and inject greater competition into the market for remittance services.

To build more resilient democracies, we can also develop partnerships which deliver education, training and technical assistance to promote good governance and human rights. This can be done in ways unique to the Commonwealth membership, including through programs such as the *Commonwealth Network of Election Management Bodies*, which helps train and develop administrators to achieve fair and free elections. Through careful development of bi- and multilateral partnerships between members, we can build better economies, democracies, and societies. Building the resilience of individual states in these ways will reinforce decisions taken in Perth to strengthen the Commonwealth association itself and its institutions.

### ***Building a resilient Commonwealth – Strengthening our association and its institutions***

Leaders in Perth will consider the future of the Commonwealth in the context of decisions taken at CHOGM 2009, where they resolved to make the Commonwealth a stronger and more effective international organisation into the future. In doing so, leaders at Port of Spain called for the creation of an independent Eminent Persons Group (EPG) to examine options for reform of Commonwealth institutions to bring the association into a more effective framework of cooperation and partnership. The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) was also charged to consider ways in which its role might be strengthened to deal with the full range of serious or persistent violations of the Commonwealth's fundamental values. The results of these two review processes will be presented to leaders in Perth. The credibility of the Commonwealth as an organisation will turn on how we are

seen to respond to these recommendations. We can focus on the overall health of the Commonwealth and the values it seeks to uphold, and so realise our commitment in Port of Spain to ‘build a stronger and more resilient and progressive family of nations’.

The Commonwealth is remarkable not only because of its diversity as an association, but because its membership is united by a set of shared values which continue to stand the test of time. Since its inception in 1995, CMAG has played a vital role as custodian of the Commonwealth’s fundamental political values. It has been firm in its commitment to this undertaking and the Commonwealth is a stronger association today for this resolve. Yet CMAG can play a still more effective role. Furnished with the recommendations of its report, *Strengthening the Role of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group*, leaders will give fresh consideration to CMAG’s mandate and to the way in which this mandate is fulfilled, to enable CMAG to perform a stronger and more resilient function into the future.

These reforms will enhance CMAG’s focus on building positive relationships with members and proactive, preventive diplomacy to facilitate timely engagement when Commonwealth political values are at risk. CMAG could also broaden its activities through closer engagement with the Secretary-General, Commonwealth organisations, and other regional and intergovernmental institutions, including those outside the Commonwealth family.

Consideration of CMAG reform will be complemented by leaders’ consideration and action on the recommendations of the Eminent Persons Group. Growing out of widespread public engagement and consultation on the need to strengthen Commonwealth processes and institutional frameworks, including through the Royal Commonwealth Society’s *Commonwealth Conversation* in 2009, the EPG was commissioned by leaders at Port of Spain as a review process intended to result in practical measures to ensure that the Commonwealth remains relevant to its time and people. The EPG’s report, *A Commonwealth of the People: Time for urgent reform*, followed an extensive process of public consultation. The Group’s recommendations provide valuable advice and a blueprint for leaders’ considerations of how to create a more resilient Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth is unique as a values-based international association and recent events in North Africa and the Middle East are a reminder that these basic human aspirations to live a life of dignity and respect are as universal and as relevant today as they have ever been. These values are the result of over sixty years of collaboration and development and have been articulated at Singapore, Harare, Millbrook, Coolum, and Port of Spain. Yet they are not as familiar or accessible to the peoples of the Commonwealth as they once were or might again be. Adopting a *Charter of the Commonwealth* provides a chance to bring these values and aspirations together in one place, making them more relevant and accessible to the Commonwealth’s peoples so

that they can better share, communicate and promote these values amongst themselves and others. A *Charter*, expressed simply, is something to which all Commonwealth peoples could identify – regardless of age, gender, or any other factor. It would emphasise the development of societies and economies to better meet the needs of citizens, and affirm our commitment to peace, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

To promote and protect the values and aspirations expressed in a *Charter*, consideration should be given to establishing a mechanism through which these values may be upheld. Reform of CMAG will be a key step in this regard, but should be complemented by other steps. A new office of a Commonwealth Commissioner for Democracy, the Rule of Law and Human Rights would assist CMAG and the ‘good offices’ interventions of the Commonwealth Secretary-General to better protect and promote political values. The Commonwealth can be proud of the efforts its institutions undertake, often out of the spotlight, to work with Commonwealth members to build the institutions and norms of free societies. The Commonwealth has led the world in achieving great successes in the past; CHOGM 2011 presents an opportunity to ensure that the Commonwealth can deliver on this great promise once again. Through constructive, two-way engagement with governments and by drawing on the vast work of civil society, inter- and non-governmental organisations and professional networks, a Commissioner could provide valuable guidance and support to CMAG and the Commonwealth Secretary-General. The resilience of the Commonwealth association and the integrity of its institutions would be improved through an enhanced ability to address conditions which might give rise to violations of core values early in the process, not when it is too late.

Leaders at CHOGM 2011 will also consider how to empower the Commonwealth Secretariat to deliver more effective outcomes with its limited resources. Building the national capacities of member states is a core purpose of the Commonwealth association; economic and social transformation is critical to eliminating poverty and meeting the basic needs of the Commonwealth’s people. In an often crowded field of inter- and non-governmental organisations, care needs to be taken to ensure that the Commonwealth avoids duplicating work which is more effectively delivered by organisations with a more narrow focus. Reform is needed to realign and enhance the Commonwealth’s development work so that it can produce better results by concentrating on those areas where its programs are of most value to members. For example, the provision of expert assistance through the *Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation* could be enhanced to ensure targeted development assistance is delivered more effectively and more often.

Strengthening the Commonwealth as an institution will promote better democratic and development outcomes for members and help build national resilience. It will also pave

the way for the development of a clear and influential voice for the Commonwealth, heightening its international impact in a way that advances action on global issues of importance to members.

### ***Building global resilience – Strengthening our Commonwealth voice***

Many challenges affecting Commonwealth members are also ones which demand global responses. These challenges require engagement by leaders which delivers both partnerships between Commonwealth members and a mechanism through which the Commonwealth can contribute to global action which secures development outcomes that are relevant to members – both now and into the future. The Commonwealth accounts for around one third of the world’s population across developing and developed countries alike. This means that when the Commonwealth chooses to speak collectively, its voice carries real weight and legitimacy.

Soon after CHOGM 2011, the international community will come together at several major fora to discuss far reaching challenges like economic growth, food security, climate change, and sustainable development. The Commonwealth’s ability to realise practical outcomes through international action in other fora was demonstrated clearly in 2009, when leaders’ Port of Spain Climate Change Consensus contributed to global action on fast start financing for small and developing countries. This signalled to the world that the Commonwealth can deliver clear leadership on the major challenges of today, and CHOGM 2011 can continue the Commonwealth’s role in achieving international outcomes which produce relevant, practical assistance to members.

On economic development, the Commonwealth should ensure its voice is heard loud and clear at the G20 summit in France. The Commonwealth should support efforts by the G20 to restore global economic health, improve food security, enhance investment in infrastructure, and strengthen social protection.

On climate change, a Commonwealth voice in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), at the Conference of the Parties (COP17) in South Africa and beyond, could call for mitigation action by all major economies and focus adaptation efforts towards building resilience to the adverse impacts of climate change for the smallest and most vulnerable states, including through community-based approaches to adaptation. To help meet the adaptation needs of these states, the Commonwealth could call for design of the Green Climate Fund to recognise the need to prioritise their access to funds.

The Commonwealth is also well placed to contribute to international discussions at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in Brazil next year. Many Commonwealth members, including small and vulnerable states, face the challenges of balancing the

objectives of sustainable development and environmental protection with the need to eradicate poverty and improve living standards. Through decisions at CHOGM 2011, the Commonwealth can build momentum for the sharing of information and best-practice in areas such as sustainable land and water management, international collaboration on agricultural research, and the development of sustainable mining practices.

The importance of a constructive and influential Commonwealth voice is not limited to international fora immediately following CHOGM 2011 or to a discrete set of issues. It will be relevant to the needs of members well into the future. The Commonwealth cannot itself set the agenda or control the outcomes of international action on global issues. But it can work in a way that other associations cannot, by leveraging its diversity and unity to cut through traditional regional and interests-based groupings, and by advocating for its membership in a way that provides a voice for the interests of small and vulnerable states and secures practical outcomes which make a difference to the daily lives of its peoples.



CHOGM 2011 is an opportunity to improve the Commonwealth’s ability to put its values into action. Steps can be taken to build resilience as individual nations and as a Commonwealth association. We can strengthen and renew the profile and impact of the association by undertaking far-sighted reforms which will shape the future success of the Commonwealth. Leaders can enhance the Commonwealth’s interaction in the international arena by demonstrating that the Commonwealth can and will continue to play a role in bridging gaps and influencing global action. In working to build resilience in these ways, leaders will deliver a Commonwealth that remains relevant to future generations, has a framework for effective engagement, and meets the needs of its members. These decisions will shape an enduring legacy for CHOGM 2011 – one which will continue to be visible in the peace and prosperity of the Commonwealth’s peoples.

