



**Commonwealth**  
Foundation



## **REPORT OF MEETING**

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### **REGIONAL CONSULTATION**

***“PACIFIC CIVIL SOCIETY DRIVING CHANGE  
FOR A DYNAMIC COMMONWEALTH”***

**PREPARATION FOR THE 2011 COMMONWEALTH PEOPLE’S FORUM & THE  
COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING (CHOGM)**

**(23-24 MAY, 2011)  
SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA**

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Compiled by  
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On behalf of the Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO)  
& the Commonwealth Foundation

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Suva, Fiji Islands.  
Commonwealth Foundation  
May, 2011

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## **GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMNS**

ACP	-	African Caribbean Pacific
CHOGM	-	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CMAG	-	Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group
CPF	-	Commonwealth Peoples Forum
CSAC	-	Commonwealth Civil Society Advisory Committee
CSO	-	Civil Society Organisation
EPA	-	Economic Partnership Agreement
EPG	-	Eminent Persons Group
EU	-	European Union
FIC	-	Forum Island Countries
HLF4	-	Fourth High Level Forum
MDGs	-	Millennium Development Goals
NLU	-	National Liaison Unit
NGO	-	Non Government Organisation
PACER	-	Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations
PIANGO	-	Pacific Islands Association of Non Government Organisations
PICTA	-	Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement
PIFS	-	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
WACOSS	-	Western Australia Council of Social Services
WTO	-	World Trade Organisation

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. Representatives of Pacific Island Civil Society Organisations from Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Australia and New Zealand, met in Sydney, Australia, from 23-24 May, 2011 as part of regional preparations for the Commonwealth People's Forum (CPF) to be held in Perth, Western Australia, in October 2011, during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).
2. The regional consultation was organised by the Commonwealth Foundation, in collaboration with the Pacific Islands Association of Non Government Organisations (PIANGO).
3. The meeting discussed and identified key issues affecting Pacific peoples in the areas of democratic governance, the environment, vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), climate change, human rights, trade, gender, health, education and culture. It also heard the findings of the report of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) and assessed the importance of civil society to the future of the Commonwealth. In terms of the relevance of the Commonwealth, the meeting articulated ways in which Commonwealth institutions, governments and CSOs could effectively respond to the priority concerns of Pacific peoples.
4. The *Outcomes Statement* (Annex 1) endorsed at the end of the meeting called on the Commonwealth to assist Pacific civil society in the promotion of equitable participatory decision-making processes through capacity building and training, including through sharing and mapping of existing good practice examples amongst Commonwealth countries. It recommended that the *Commonwealth Charter* be used as a reference point to progress these issues.
5. The regional meeting also asked the Commonwealth to take targeted actions to combat climate change and loss of biodiversity and requested that the Commonwealth commission a Consumption Report identifying each Commonwealth country's contribution to climate change and biodiversity loss, the outcome of which could act as a guide to each country's share of financing for Commonwealth Environmental programs.
6. In the area of education and training, the meeting noted the drain of trained educators and other professionals from Pacific States and called on Commonwealth Member States to ensure that projects in the Pacific prioritise local expertise over expatriate consultancies, suggesting this be done through piloting training programs.

7. The Commonwealth was requested to directly support local community human rights advocates and community legal centres to build capacity and mechanisms for bottom-up advocacy for human rights and progressive reform towards better governance, with priority given to the most disadvantaged groups and with a focus on sharing experiences between countries. The Commonwealth was asked to pressure member states to ratify, implement and report on human rights conventions and declarations (eg. *The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*).
8. The meeting noted that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4 and 5 are the furthest off-track globally and in the Pacific, with the shortage of health workers being an acute problem. It called on Commonwealth developing country governments to prioritise the delivery of acute and primary health care by implementing national costed health care plans which include the education, training and retention of health workers with a particular focus on female health workers. Commonwealth governments, the Commonwealth Secretariat and civil society were also asked to act with urgency to undertake appropriate legal reforms in the health sector.
9. Commonwealth Member States were asked to ensure that future trade agreements are driven by social and development objectives, and not by markets. Member States were further called upon to advance gender equity, access to quality education for girls and women's empowerment via focusing on strategic, prioritised and achievable actions to ensure maximum impact.
10. Acknowledging the important place of Indigenous Peoples in the culture and identity of the Commonwealth and its Member States, the meeting called on the Commonwealth to recognise the impact of colonisation on indigenous peoples and to empower them in their progress towards self determination. It further called on Member States to protect the rights of indigenous peoples in the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and agreed that Pacific people must work together to better articulate and enhance Pacific Island identities and solidarity.
11. Governments have accepted that civil society organisations are essential development actors in their own right and governments therefore have obligations "to deepen their engagement" with CSOs in the development process. In order to facilitate this, the meeting called on all governments, donors and other stakeholders to progress commitments made under the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005)* and the *Accra Agenda for Action (2008)*. Commonwealth governments were also asked to support CSO participation in the Fourth High Level Forum in Busan, South Korea, in November-December 2011 and to progress aid effectiveness and development effectiveness objectives.

## II. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

### AGENDA ITEM 1: OFFICIAL OPENING

1. Dr Zuzanka Kutena, representative of the Commonwealth Civil Society Advisory Committee (CSAC), welcomed participants to the Pacific Regional Consultation. She introduced the representative of the Metropolitan Aboriginal Council, Ms Donna Ingram who warmly welcomed participants to the land of the *Gadigal* and said she was proud to be a part of the Aboriginal culture, the oldest living culture in the world. Participants then witnessed a traditional indigenous Australian smoking ceremony, conducted prior to their entering the meeting venue. The traditional smoking ceremony is an ancient custom among indigenous Australians that involves smoldering various native plants to produce smoke which has cleansing properties and the ability to ward off bad spirits. Smoking ceremonies are performed at most major events, including births and deaths.

2. Inside the meeting venue, Dr Kutena acknowledged the traditional owners of the *Gadigal* land and restated her welcome to participants. She acknowledged, with thanks, the collaboration and work of PIANGO in bringing the meeting to realisation. She said that she hoped the meeting would allow everyone to begin together on a new page. Participants then heard a piece played on the *digeridoo* prior to the opening prayer, offered by Mrs Lorine Tevi, PIANGO Board Member (Fiji).

3. On behalf of CSAC, Mr Siotame Drew Havea, PIANGO Chairperson (Tonga), also welcomed participants to the meeting saying that both he and Dr Kutena represented the Pacific region on the CSAC, with Mr Havea representing the Pacific's 22 island countries and territories and Dr Kutena representing Australia and New Zealand.

4. He said that PIANGO was excited to be co-hosting the Pacific CSO preparatory meeting for the Commonwealth Peoples Forum at CHOGM 2011. Mr Havea said the Pacific preparatory meeting also provided an opportunity to also hear the recommendations of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG), to be presented to the CHOGM meeting later in October 2011.

5. He outlined challenges faced by PIANGO in terms of human and financial resources and said that these had however, not prevented the organisation from continuing to be a part of global and regional CSO processes. Since 2010, PIANGO, as the Pacific Islands only regional coordinating body, has been actively involved in global and regional activities in the areas of CSO development effectiveness, climate change, trade and food security.

6. Mr Havea said he hoped that the two-day consultations would contribute to a sustainable and equitable environment for the Pacific in terms of development. He then introduced Dr Danny Sriskandarajah, interim Executive Director of the Commonwealth

Foundation saying that the meeting was honoured to have his presence and that the opportunity would also allow Dr Sriskandarajah to gain first-hand knowledge of Pacific Island issues.

**ADDRESS BY INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COMMONWEALTH FOUNDATION  
— DR DANNY SRISKANDARAJAH**

7. Dr Danny Sriskandarajah said he understood the challenges of the region having grown up in Australia and Papua New Guinea and felt very privileged to be at the meeting. He said that the next six months leading up to the Commonwealth Peoples Forum were critical. He set the scene the by discussing the Commonwealth itself, the Commonwealth Foundation and the role of the Commonwealth Peoples Forum.

8. The Commonwealth is comprised of 54 sovereign nation states and is represented by the leaders of these states at the CHOGM. Dr Sriskandarajah said that in his view, the important and unique occurs outside the CHOGM meeting itself - in the Commonwealth Peoples Forum which brings together the business, youth and civil society sectors from around the globe.

9. The CPF comprises about 100 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and its history is older and more significant than that of relatively recent leaders summits such as the UN, G20 etc. Despite its diversity, the Commonwealth shares common bonds and values and is more grounded in what it does with civil society – engaging with the people via peoples’ organisations it is as much an association of 2.1 billion people as it is of 54 nation states. Set up in 1965, the Commonwealth Foundation was mandated to invest public funding in people, which is currently being done through grants of STG 1 million a year. However, a paltry amount is being given to the Pacific Islands and this is something which the CF seeks to immediately rectify.

10. Capacity building initiatives with CSOs throughout the Commonwealth are conducted in the areas of governance, of strengthening access and networks and in the area of culture (eg. the Commonwealth Writers Prize, residencies for artists etc). More importantly, the Commonwealth attempts to bring CSO voices to intergovernmental processes through meaningful dialogue such as through the CPF. In this regard, regional consultations are being held in the lead-up to the 2011 CPF to gather regional voices and identify key themes and emerging priorities. These will be presented via a common CSO Statement to Commonwealth Foreign Ministers in September 2011 prior to the CPF and CHOGM in October. It will also allow at least six weeks to canvass support for the CSO agenda to be championed in Perth. The document will also assist the Commonwealth Foundation to shape its work plan and agenda over the next few years.

10. Dr Sriskandarajah noted the importance for CSOs to be strategic in their approaches and demands of Commonwealth leaders in terms of the CSO Statement. He said while

space is needed to articulate CSO issues, there is also an equal need to have a smart and strategic way of asking for these demands and to propose ways in which the Commonwealth family, individual Member States and CHOGM can assist in championing the CSO agenda on the world stage.

11. He further noted two rapidly changing landscapes:

- Boundaries between civil society and other actors (eg. state, private sector and the “third sector” or CSOs) are undergoing significant changes. For example, in the UK more of the service functions usually associated with government are being contracted to the private sector with a supportive role sometimes given to CSOs.
- The Commonwealth itself and the re-examination of its role and place amidst other major groupings of nations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The Commonwealth is relatively under-resourced in a relatively over-crowded marketplace, however, it is at a momentous period in its history and CSOs must remain at the heart of what it does.

**ADDRESS BY EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE, COMMONWEALTH PEOPLES FORUM  
— SUE ASH, CHAIRPERSON**

The Chair, Mr Drew Havea, introduced Ms Sue Ash, Chair, Executive Steering Committee, Commonwealth Peoples Forum.

12. Ms Sue Ash acknowledged the traditional owners of the *Gadigal* land and elders, past and present. She explained the Commonwealth Peoples Forum (CPF) and its significance in terms of the 2011 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) being held in Perth, Western Australia, in October. She contextualised the Sydney Pacific Regional Consultation in light of global and regional processes in the lead-up to the CHOGM.

13. The next Commonwealth People’s Forum (CPF) will be held in Perth, Western Australia, from 25 to 27 October 2011. The CPF, brings together civil society representatives from around the world, to discuss and debate key issues facing Commonwealth people. Held every two years in the run-up to the CHOGM, the CPF is the single biggest opportunity for civil society to engage with Commonwealth leaders on global development issues.

14. The 2011 CPF is organised by the Commonwealth Foundation and hosted by the Western Australian Council of Social Service with the support of the Australian Government and the Western Australian Government.

13. The 2011 CPF programme consists of four parts:

- (i) The advocacy of the CSO Statement
- (ii) Opening ceremony (25 October, 2011)
- (iii) Plenary sessions (26-27 October, 2011)
- (iv) Learning journeys (This will discuss CSO-government relationships and look at ways of altering the way CSOs lead/engage in debates).

In addition to the above, three parallel events (ie. the youth, business and CSO Forums will also take place).

Registration opened on 19 May, 2011 and more information can be accessed from the Commonwealth Foundation website at [www.commonwealthfoundation.com](http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com)

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS: THE EPG AND COMMONWEALTH REFORM  
— HON. MICHAEL KIRBY, AC, CMG**

The Chair, Dr Zuzanka Kutena (Australia), introduced the Honourable Justice Michael Kirby (Australia), who delivered the Keynote Address. The Hon. Kirby, who has served on two Australian High Courts, is known internationally for his work in social justice and human rights and is a member of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group.

- 14. The Hon. Kirby discussed the recommendations of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) in terms of Commonwealth reform and its institutional relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- 15. The EPG was established at the initiative of Commonwealth Heads of Government at their meeting, in Port-of-Spain in November 2009. Its mandate is to explore and recommend ways, in the context of promoting the Commonwealth's values and principles, that would sharpen the impact, strengthen the networks and raise the profile of the Commonwealth to ensure it "will remain relevant to its times and people in future".
- 16. The EPG has encouraged wide involvement in its work and has sought input into its report prior to its finalisation before the CHOGM in October. The group has received over 230 submissions from Commonwealth Civil Society Organisations as well as numerous communications from individuals. The Group has placed great value on the observations and suggestions it received and has given careful consideration to each of them.

17. The report makes the following major recommendations:

- A “Charter of the Commonwealth” be developed and adopted after the widest possible consultation across Commonwealth countries and with the active participation of Civil Society Organisations.
- A Commissioner for Democracy and the Rule of Law be appointed to provide, *inter alia*, objective information to the Secretary-General and the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) on serious or persistent violations of the rule of law within the framework of the Commonwealth’s core values and to indicate approaches for remedial action; and to supply advice to the Secretary-General on the eligibility of countries that apply for membership of the Commonwealth on the basis of its core values.
- Where Commonwealth values are violated, the range of measures already available to the Secretary-General and CMAG be implemented expeditiously, and that the measures be expanded to include: undertaking constructive pre-emptive and ongoing engagement with countries; the adoption of objective criteria by CMAG that would trigger its engagement with a member country; the strengthening of structures for engagement by the Secretary-General and CMAG with suspended or former members.
- One or two Academies for Democracy and Election Training be established to provide election training for governments, elections commissions, and civil society organisations on a fee-for-service basis.
- The culture of democracy and of democratic leadership be strengthened by:
  - Extending the period for which Commonwealth election observers are deployed allowing them to deepen their engagement with stakeholders, including electoral officials, political parties, and civil society. Any adverse report should be submitted to the Secretary-General and CMAG immediately for necessary action to be taken.
  - Broadening the Commonwealth’s remit for election observation to include support for post-election transition of governments and civic education on elections and participation in them.
  - Strengthening sound Parliamentary practice, including in partnership with Commonwealth civil organisations and other internationally recognised bodies.

18. The report also makes recommendations in the areas of enhancing the Commonwealth's role in development and trade; young people, sport and development; women; tackling HVI/AIDS; coping with climate change and strengthening institutional mechanisms.

## **AGENDA ITEM 2: PLENARY**

### ***Discussion Following Hon. Michael Kirby Presentation***

19. Participants discussed issues such as the core value of being a member of the Commonwealth, the need for democracy to be defined in the context of the Pacific Island region, the diminishing space of civil society, gender equity and women's political empowerment and Parliamentary representation, legal reform in the context of HIV/AIDS, the need for governments to adopt a bottom-up approach to governance and the need for critical thinking by civil society in terms of CSO-government engagement.
20. They also noted with concern, the recurring 'brain-drain' issues affecting the Pacific Islands and the loss of skilled Pacific Islanders to larger, more affluent countries, particularly Australia, and to a lesser extent, North America and other regions.
21. A suggestion was made that the Commonwealth consider changing the name of the *Commonwealth Charter* to the *Commonwealth Peoples Charter*. Justice Kirby explained that the objective was to present the document as a people's charter and that its primary objective was to ground the document in the will of the people. He said that the EPG felt that the document should come from the people and not be imposed on to them. He said that the Commonwealth had always regarded itself as being a 'Commonwealth of the Peoples'.
22. On the need for the nature of democracy to be defined in the context of the Pacific Island region, Hon. Kirby noted with distress, that the electoral process was not being respected in Fiji. He said that while the Fiji government had left the Commonwealth, the Fijian people had not. He further noted his desire that the EPG report would act as a 'light in the window' for the government and people of Fiji.
23. With regard to the Commonwealth recognising the role of CSOs in ensuring civic participation and community wellbeing, Hon. Kirby highlighted that the EPG Report strongly recommended that the voice of the people be conveyed through civil society and said it further called on governments to ensure that this occurred.

24. The diminishing space of civil society was noted with concern and in this context, it was also noted that the EPG Report did not contain reference to the role of governments and leaders to strengthen civil society. The Hon. Kirby said the report presently made references to the role of civil society in the context of youth but further submissions could be made by CSOs.
25. On the suggestion that governments adopt a bottom-up approach to governance, he noted that notions of peace, order and good government need to be harmonised and in tune with governments' notions of the same (eg. Australia's treatment of refugees, Singapore's notion of freedom of assembly). In this regard, there is a need for greater harmony between words and actions, including the need to establish appropriate institutional mechanisms, in particular in Commonwealth Member States.
26. The poor reference to gender in the report was noted, particularly in the context of women's political empowerment and representation in Parliaments. The Hon. Kirby advised that Commonwealth countries had targets which they needed to adhere to and these also covered women's representation in Parliament. In addition, the Commonwealth could provide assistance to countries in implementation of their targets. The focus of the EPG was to ensure that institutions collaborated more effectively.
27. On the issue of appropriate legal reforms in the area of HIV/AIDS, Hon. Kirby said that the Commonwealth Secretariat had accepted its need to become more engaged, particularly if it were to continue to become more prudent, valued and relevant.
28. The need for the Commonwealth and the international community to take a stronger position against human rights abuses was noted. On whether or not the EPG would support this, Hon. Kirby said that the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) had not, to date, taken action on complaints of human rights abuses. Hon. Kirby also emphasised the need to make the CMAG work more effectively in relation to its own remit.
29. Hon. Kirby was asked to comment on the situation in Sri Lanka and the Eminent Group's view on the violation of human rights, including charges of genocide against Sri Lankan leaders. Justice Kirby pointed out the intransigence of both sides of the conflict and highlighted the need for a solutions-based approach, headed by an individual of integrity who would be able to help change bureaucratic systems.
30. Mr Drew Havea thanked the Hon. Kirby for his informative presentation. All participants then briefly introduced themselves.

31. Dr. Danny Sriskandarajah was then invited back to the podium for the plenary session on his presentation.

***Discussion on Dr. Danny Sriskandarajah's Presentation***

32. Participants noted climate change, peace and security issues affecting Pacific Island people. They also discussed gender and how the Commonwealth CSO Statement could ask for specific initiatives from the 2011 CHOGM in this regard. They discussed ways to build the public profile of the Commonwealth, including areas where it could add value in the Pacific region such as through working with the regional NGO coordinating umbrella, the Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO), to facilitate the Commonwealth's linkages between itself and civil society groups.
33. Dr Sriskandarajah emphasised the need for civil society organisations to consider carefully the language and issues articulated in the CSO Statement to be taken to the 2011 CHOGM in Perth in October. He also noted the need to consider areas where the Commonwealth could act, champion and add value in meaningful ways - such as in the areas of international cooperation, gender, human rights and the rule of law. In order to maximise its effectiveness, the Commonwealth could prioritise its objectives into one or two achievable targets to be attained each year.
34. On the issue of the changing regional landscape and the need for critical thinking by civil society, particularly in terms of its engagement with governments, Dr Sriskandarajah said the Commonwealth could assist with capacity building initiatives. He noted the need for more sharing and exchanges of lessons and experiences amongst Commonwealth countries in areas such as culture and conflict and so on.

**AGENDA ITEM 3: REPORT ON AUSTRALIAN CONSULTATIONS**

**— IRINA CATALINI, CEO, WEST AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

35. The Chair, Dr Zuzanka Kutena introduced Ms Irina Cattalini, Chief Executive Officer, West Australian Council of Social Services (WACOSS). Ms Cattalini acknowledged the traditional owners of the land and thanked PIANGO and the Commonwealth Foundation for organising the meeting.
36. Ms Cattalini provided an overview of the Australian consultations, held in March 2011, which, along with the Pacific Regional Consultation are part of civil society preparations for the Commonwealth Peoples Forum, to be convened in October 2011, alongside the CHOGM.

37. The one-day Western Australian and Australian Civil Society Consultations were held on 11 March and 16th March, in Perth and Canberra respectively. The consultations were a great success, and the recommendations reached by the consultation groups were tabled to the Civil Society Advisory Committee (CSAC) for the Commonwealth Foundation in London. The draft Australian CSO Statement was also fed into the Pacific Regional Consultation.

38. The Australian consultations focused on five major actions to be implemented in six major thematic areas:

- Indigenous rights issues, human rights and women's rights
- Culture and identity
- Education and the education of girls
- Environment and climate change
- Food security
- Democracy and governance
- Health and wellbeing (including the social determinants of health, allocation of resources)

39. The Commonwealth CSO Statement needs to focus on overarching priority strategic issues, as agreed by CSOs, in the current political and global context. It should also aim to better position the Commonwealth to assist civil society groups.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 4: KEY ISSUES IN THE PACIFIC – CANVASSING CHALLENGES AND POSITIVE SOLUTIONS**

40. Facilitated group work then took place around the following thematic areas:

- Democracy and Governance (Facilitator – Samoa)
- Climate Change and Environment (Facilitator – Kiribati)
- Education, Technology and Innovation (Facilitator – Tonga)
- Peace and Security, Human Rights; Health and Wellbeing (Facilitator - Solomon Islands)
- Economics, Development, Trade and Finance (Facilitator – Samoa)
- Gender and Women's Rights (Facilitator – Tonga)
- Culture and Identity (Facilitator – PIANGO)

In addition, groups were also asked to consider the following in the context of the Commonwealth:

1. What issues has the Commonwealth been most effective on over the past two years?
2. Which issues should the Commonwealth focus on over the coming two years?
3. What is the response to the recommendations of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group?
4. How important is civil society to the future of the Commonwealth?

#### **AGENDA ITEM 5: GROUPS REPORT TO PLENARY**

41. Groups reported on their discussions around the major thematic areas. These reports were further summarised and the issues re-prioritised at the following day's sessions, with participants highlighting as well, areas where the Commonwealth could assist. The synopsis of each group's recommendations were the basis for the *Outcomes Statement* which appears at Annex 1.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 6: TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT**

##### **— ADAM WOLFENDEN, PACIFIC NETWORK ON GLOBALISATION (PANG)**

42. The Chair, Dr Zuzanka Kutena introduced Mr Adam Wolfenden, Trade Justice Campaigner, Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG). Mr Wolfenden who discussed regional challenges and solutions in the area of trade and development.
43. Mr Wolfenden noted the significant challenges of the region in the context of trade such as size and scope of the Pacific Islands, high costs of training, the 'brain drain' and the region's high dependence on imported technology. The Pacific's unique custom and land practices, in particular women's access to ownership and control and the communal control of land, were also noted.
44. Long-standing preferential trade agreements between the Pacific Islands and blocs like the European Union (EU) have now come to an end, forcing the region and developing countries to compete in the global open market system, negotiate free trade agreements and lose the space to ask for what they want. In addition, Pacific trade officials and people do not have the time and resources to consult on trade agreements which affect local, national and regional development. Development must also be defined in a Pacific rather than in a Western context.
45. In this context, the implications on the Pacific Islands of regional and international trade agreements were also noted with concern. These include the

Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus (PACER Plus), EU-ACP<sup>1</sup> Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA). For instance, PICTA focuses on building South-South trade and is presently only in goods. PACER Plus is a free trade agreement between Forum Island Countries (FICs), Australia and New Zealand. It is being sold as a development agreement, however is being negotiated as a free trade agreement. A number of CSOs have called for a moratorium on PACER Plus. Only Fiji and Papua New Guinea have signed on to the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the EU.

46. Developing countries, to their credit, have maintained their position on the Doha Round of talks with the World Trade Organisation (WTO), however, this has not prevented the region from being affected by the negative impacts of trade agreements. Job losses, negative effects on local manufacturing industries and increasing incidences of non communicable diseases as the Pacific Islands continue to be used as a dumping ground for off-cuts and rejected produce from larger countries, including New Zealand, are some effects of the new trading regime.

### ***Discussion***

47. Participants noted the need for a better understanding of the content and effects of trade agreements at local level and requested that PANG provide such information. Further information was also sought on the impacts of the US naval base being built in Guam. Mr Wolfenden responded that PANG produced Briefing Papers on various issues which were distributed through their networks who worked at local level. The challenge with trade, he noted, was the need to make the issue more accessible and agreed that additional resources were needed to ensure this. He further noted that a priority for the region at the present time was to focus on trade negotiations and their impact. While Guam, was not a country that PANG worked in, the organisation considered the issue of labour mobility to be a major concern for the Pacific. He also referred the meeting to a paper produced by the Pacific Conference of Churches entitled *Rethinking the Region* which discussed issues affecting the Pacific Islands today such as governance and leadership, peace and security, economic development and political reform and cultural and social cohesion.
48. The negative impact of the trade agreement between the Kingdom of Tonga and the WTO was noted with grave concern, particularly in the context of the increasing Chinese labour force (including Chinese sex workers) and the foreign ownership of many business sectors in Tonga. The sometimes negative effect of

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<sup>1</sup> EU-European Union  
ACP-African Caribbean Pacific

Australia's influence in the region was noted and it was agreed that the Pacific Islands now felt it deserved greater justice and equity.

**AGENDA ITEM 7: ORGANICS/FOOD/PACIFIC WOMEN IN BUSINESS**  
**— ADIMAIMALAGA TAFUNAI, WOMEN IN BUSINESS, SAMOA**

49. The Chair, Dr Zuzanka Kutena introduced Adimaimalaga Tafunai, representative of Women in Business, Samoa. Adimaimalaga said agriculture was an abundant and available resource in the region and Pacific Island Countries needed to work together turn this into a marketable product.
50. The Pacific's isolation and its small, fragmented markets have prevented the region from effectively reaching global markets, resulting in many global economic reports only reflecting situations in Asia, Australia and New Zealand.
51. Trade must be diverse as the focus on a single crop strategy places producers in vulnerable positions and is detrimental to food security, particularly for small island economies. In addition, Pacific people and producers need to share learnings and work together to exchange ideas. The Commonwealth could also work with the region to facilitate these exchanges.
52. The Samoa Women in Business group have focused their income generating projects on the creation of employment at the village level and have, in turn, provided a conduit for small producers to reach global markets. The group believes that sustainable development cannot occur without the respect and understanding of cultures and have thus developed programs focused on families, communities and villages (such as in the case of its virgin coconut oil, fine mat weaving and banana export projects).
53. The virgin coconut oil project is organically certified and utilises simple, appropriate technology. Key marketing strategies of the project are the identification of the right markets, development of financial management skills, focus on a high value/low volume product, fair trade and organic certification and the meeting of export and production standards. This has resulted in the Women in Business project being able to penetrate the global market, resulting in Samoa's virgin coconut oil becoming the major ingredient in 12 Body Shop products, sold in 54 countries around the world. Women in Business are also exploring standards and markets to export Samoan coffee.

***Discussion***

54. Participants noted the importance of organic farming for the Pacific, including the need to have organic certification for export purposes. The need for Pacific civil society to determine strategic ways to effectively access, work with and influence government leaders and trade officials was also noted, particularly in the context of ongoing trade negotiations and trade agreements which impact on the region.

## **AGENDA ITEM 8: MOVING FORWARD MEANINGFULLY**

This session was an open Plenary on sharing Pacific perspectives on priority concerns facing the region and identifying how civil society, governments and the Commonwealth could respond. Outcomes of this session are also reflected and summarised in the *Outcomes Statement* (Annex 1).

## **AGENDA ITEM 9: PRESENTATION & ADOPTION OF OUTCOMES STATEMENT**

58. The Chair introduced and facilitated the session and the meeting Rapporteur discussed the Outcomes Statement. Following further discussion and final consensus, the meeting adopted the Outcomes Statement with amendments. (See Annex 1)

## **AGENDA ITEM 10: CLOSING**

59. Speaking on behalf of the Commonwealth Foundation and CSAC, Dr Zuzanka Kutena thanked all participants, the PIANGO interim Executive Director and Secretariat for their collaboration with CSAC and their commitment in bringing the meeting to realisation.
  60. The meeting was then closed with a final prayer by Mrs Lorine Tevi, PIANGO Board Member.
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**REGIONAL CONSULTATION**

**PACIFIC CIVIL SOCIETY DRIVING CHANGE FOR A DYNAMIC COMMONWEALTH:  
PREPARATION FOR CPF CHOGM<sup>2</sup> 2011  
23-24 MAY, 2011  
SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA**

**OUTCOMES STATEMENT**

*“Our ancestors first voyaged and traded across the vast Pacific, the world’s largest ocean, thousands of years ago. They settled and thrived on its atolls, volcanic islands, river valleys and forests, developing intimate and dependant inter-relationships with the sea and land, embracing the richness of life. Over one thousand unique languages have since evolved and define today, the unique cultural and spiritual identity of our diverse peoples.”*

**Preamble**

Representatives of Pacific Island Civil Society Organisations, including Australia and New Zealand, met in Sydney, Australia, from 23-24 May, 2011 as part of regional preparations for the Commonwealth People’s Forum to be held in Perth, Western Australia, in October 2011.

The regional consultation identified key issues affecting Pacific people in the areas of democratic governance, the environment, vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), climate change, human rights, trade, gender, health, education and culture. It also heard the findings of the report of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) and assessed the importance of civil society to the future of the Commonwealth. The meeting also articulated ways in which Commonwealth institutions, governments and CSOs could effectively respond to the priority concerns of Pacific peoples.

It also assessed the importance of civil society to the future of the Commonwealth and articulated ways in which Commonwealth institutions, governments and CSOs could effectively respond to priority concerns of Pacific peoples in the following areas:

**Governance, Peace and Security**

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<sup>2</sup> CPF – Commonwealth People’s Forum  
CHOGM – Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

Pacific Civil Society believes that it is necessary to promote equitable participatory decision-making processes through capacity building and training, including sharing of existing good practice amongst Commonwealth countries. These areas could include elections, multi-party processes, good governance practices and values-based governance across the private and public sector. Strategies, mechanisms and targets must be designed to achieve the equitable participation of women in governance at every level of society. The Commonwealth Charter will play an important role in recognising the value of civil society in achieving such aims and the Charter should be used as a reference point to progress these issues. An additional resource to the Charter could be mapping examples of good decision-making practices and governance in Commonwealth countries.

### **Climate Change and Small Island Developing States' (SIDS) Vulnerabilities**

Pacific island countries are experiencing a rise in droughts, coastal erosion, salination of water and food insecurity as a result of anthropogenic climate change. Funding will be used for adaptation that is based on the unique needs of each Commonwealth region in the areas of: renewable energy; water rights and supply, sanitation and hygiene; food security; fisheries protection and coastal protection; agroforestry; reforestation and resettlement and capacity building. There must be an appropriate and accessible mechanism established for accessing funds. This can be channeled through a government-CSO mechanism or the Commonwealth Foundation. The overarching principle should be accessibility of funds, which is a huge difficulty in the Pacific Islands.

This funding would also provide for the creation of a Commonwealth Climate Technology Exchange that provides an open source for Commonwealth countries to share clean technologies and promote renewable energy in the Commonwealth countries. This institution would also conduct research and development into renewable energy technologies.

### **Education, Technology and Innovation**

Pacific Civil Society acknowledges the impacts of technology and other factors on education and is conscious of the role of the educational system in providing an environment for socialisation and development of youth. We recommend that Commonwealth Countries create a regional working group to explore the re-modelling of education systems and curricula to reflect and adapt to new technologies, especially information technology, to increase opportunities and meet local needs.

We are concerned by the constant drain of trained educators and other professionals from Pacific States, we therefore call on member states to ensure that projects in the Pacific prioritise local expertise over expatriate consultancies. This can be achieved

through piloting training programmes that are geared towards retention of local human resources that enhance local opportunities, including computer literacy for adults.

### **Human Rights**

Pacific Civil Society believes that in order to ensure that civil society organisations are included as equal partners in planning and implementation processes, the Commonwealth should directly support local community human rights advocates and community legal centres to build capacity and mechanisms for bottom-up advocacy for human rights and progressive reform towards better governance, with priority given to the most disadvantaged groups and with a focus on sharing experiences between countries with similar issues (such as through exchange programs).

Acknowledging the low level of sign-on and implementation by nations within the region to international human rights instruments (eg. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), the Commonwealth should pressure member states to ratify, implement and report on human rights conventions and declarations. This could be done through creating a Commonwealth Commissioner of Democracy and the Rule of Law, noting importance that it is an independent position with a properly resourced commission to enable it to identify emerging problems and to prompt commonwealth action of serious and persistent violations of the rule of law.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

Pacific Island Civil Society is concerned with the lack of priority, funding and access to acute and primary health care for people living in the small island states of the Pacific and specifically vulnerable groups such as women, children and people at risk of or living with HIV.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4 and 5 are the furthest off-track globally and in the Pacific, with the shortage of health workers an acute problem. We therefore call on Commonwealth developing country governments to prioritise the delivery of acute and primary health care by implementing national costed health care plans which include the education, training and retention of health workers with a particular focus on female health workers. We call on Commonwealth donor governments to support and provide sufficient funding for these national health care plans, including dedicated funding for the education, training and retention of health workers. Such a program must include partnership with civil society.

We are concerned by the profound impact of laws or the absence of laws that inhibit the ability of governments, civil society and the broader community to anticipate and respond to pressing public health issues in the Pacific such as HIV, maternal, newborn and child health, and domestic or gender-based violence. We call on Commonwealth governments, the Commonwealth Secretariat and civil society to act with urgency to undertake appropriate legal reforms. This should include legislation which facilitates

effective public health responses, with processes that include open and effective consultation with communities.

### **Economic Development, Trade and Finance**

Pacific Civil Society acknowledges the importance that remittances play in the Pacific communities. We are concerned about the out-migration of the skilled and unskilled workforce and the implications that this has on Pacific communities and the provision of essential services. We call on the Commonwealth Member States to hold tripartite annual meetings of Commonwealth Labour Ministers to discuss the role that labour mobility will play in broader development strategies that reflect the unique needs of each country.

Trade and development policy must support the right of countries to determine their own culturally relevant developmental paths and that support is provided for that realisation. We reiterate the statement on trade and subsidies in the 2009 CPF Peoples' Statement (Partnering for a More Equitable and Sustainable Future). We call on Commonwealth Member States to ensure that future trade agreements are driven by social and development objectives, and not by markets.

### **Gender and Women's Rights**

Pacific civil society recognises the centrality of gender equity and women's empowerment in achieving development goals, international peace and security, and human rights. We reaffirm our existing commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 1979, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995, UN Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals 2000 and the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality.

We believe that the Commonwealth has a particular and unique role as a champion for equality and human rights, and that achieving gender equity and women's empowerment is at its core an issue of political will and values. We therefore call on the Commonwealth to take a leading role in advancing gender equity and women's empowerment internationally. We propose focusing on a small number of strategic, prioritised and achievable actions to ensure maximum impact.

We call on the Commonwealth to support the development and continuation of dedicated Ministries for Women, adequately resourced to support legislative reform for non-discrimination based on gender, and the elimination of violence against women and girls, ratification of CEDAW, increased women's political participation and representation at national and local governance levels, development and implementation of national gender equity policies and culturally relevant action plans. Gender equity education should be a mainstream component of educational systems.

We call on Commonwealth Member States to advance efforts to ensure gender equity in access to, and outcomes of education at all levels, including early childcare and development. We further call on the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Member States and civil society to work together to eliminate barriers for women and girls to access quality education.

## **Culture and Identity**

Pacific Island Civil Society affirms that the Pacific is founded on religions that view life holistically. Our religious life, culture and identity are connected to our relationship with the land. The spirituality of our people is a core part of who we are and how we live as responsible citizens. We call on all stakeholders to discuss and identify the nature of early childhood development and to identify values in life, identity which builds self esteem. We call on all Commonwealth countries to become signatories to the *UNESCO 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* and to ratify the *UNESCO 2001 Declaration on Cultural Diversity*.

Acknowledging the important place of Indigenous Peoples in the culture and identity of the Commonwealth and its Member States and concerned about the persistent transgenerational poverty among Indigenous Peoples, we call on the Commonwealth to recognise the impact of colonisation on Indigenous Peoples, to empower them in their progress towards self determination and we further call on Member States to protect their rights in line with the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

We must work together to better articulate and enhance our Pacific Island identities and solidarity, recognising that cultures are dynamic. We also call on the Commonwealth to work with PIANGO<sup>3</sup> to promote cross-cultural understanding and respect through working with its National Liaison Units at regional level.

## **Aid and Development Effectiveness**

Sustainable development needs to resolve social, governance, economic and environmental challenges for the wellbeing of present and future generations. To this end, all governments, donors and other stakeholders need to progress commitments made under the *Paris Declaration 2005* and the *Accra Agenda for Action 2008*. Governments have accepted that civil society organisations are essential development actors in their own right and that governments therefore have obligations “to deepen their engagement” with CSOs in the development process.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> PIANGO – Pacific Islands Association of Non Government Organisations

<sup>4</sup> Accra Agenda for Action, para 21

(Ref. Paragraph 14 (a)-(e). *“Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination in the Pacific – Regional Workshop.” February 2011, Nadi, Fiji.*<sup>5</sup>

Pacific Island Civil Society calls on Commonwealth governments to support CSO participation in the Fourth High Level Forum in Busan, South Korea, in November-December 2011 and to progress aid effectiveness and development effectiveness objectives. We also call on the Commonwealth to establish the legal, fiscal, bureaucratic, informational, political and cultural conditions that are necessary for civil society organisations in the Pacific to engage in their countries’ development in a sustained and effective manner.

In conclusion, we, as representatives of Pacific Island Civil Society, further commit ourselves to work together to progress the outcomes of this regional consultation.

Sydney, Australia  
24 May, 2011

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<sup>5</sup> Paragraph 14 (a)-(e). *“Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination in the Pacific – Regional Workshop.” February 2011, Nadi, Fiji “Greater involvement of the non government sector in planning and implementation of development activities to ensure more broad based efforts to support development coordination. The following areas of improvement include:*

- (a) Increased transparency in partnership arrangements with government;*
- (b) Improved coordination within the non government sector and with government;*
- (c) Umbrella national non government and private sector organisations to lead in policy engagement, monitoring and reporting of aid flows and tracking the effectiveness of aid;*
- (d) Strengthen regional engagement strategies with regional umbrella non government entities;*
- (e) Coherent funding mechanisms at national and regional levels.*

**Pacific Regional Consultation Meeting Agenda  
Day 1, Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 2011**

## Questions for Participants for EPG Recommendations:

5. What issues has the Commonwealth been most effective on over the past two years?

	08.30 – 08.45	<i>Traditional ‘Welcome to Country’ and Smoking Ceremony</i>	<i>Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (conducted outside so rug-up!)</i>
1	08.45 – 09.15	<i>Registration of Participants</i>	
	09.15 – 09.30	<b>Welcome and Opening Remarks</b>	Dr. Zuzanka Kutena, CSAC. and Mr Siotame Drew Havea President, Training Group of the Pacific; Chair, Pacific Island Association for Non- Governmental Organizations and member of CSAC
	09.30 – 10.30	<b>About CHOGM/CPF</b>	Dr. Danny Sriskandarajah, Executive Director, Commonwealth Foundation, and Sue Ash, Chair, Executive Steering Committee, Commonwealth Peoples Forum
2	10.30– 11.00	<b>Keynote Address</b> The EPG and Commonwealth Reform	The Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG
3	11.00– 11.30	<b>Floor opened for Q &amp; A</b>	All
	11.30 – 11.45	<i>Tea Break</i>	
4	11.45 – 12.00	Report back on the Australian National Consultations	Irina Catallini, CEO, West Australian Council of Social Services, WACOSS
	12.00 – 12.30	Introduction of participants	All
	12.30-13.30	Voices for Change - Roundtable discussion and sharing on EPG*	Chaired Drew Havea
	13.30 -14.15	Lunch	
	14.15 -14.30	Recap of mornings proceedings	Drew Havea
5	14.30 -15.45	<b>Key Issues in the Pacific Canvassing challenges and positive solutions</b> Possible subthemes of discussion:- Fair Trade/ Organics/ Labor/ Migration/ Food Sovereignty/ Climate Change/ Disaster Relief and Mitigation/ Land / Gender/ Free Speech / Citizens Rights / Health/ Inclusion and Exclusion/ Technology/Education to name a few.	Groups facilitated by: 1. Peace and Security - Mr. Moale Vagi, PNG 2. Democracy and Governance; Mrs Jackson Samoa 3. Climate Change and Environment; Kiribati 4. Education, Technology and Innovation; Mr Samiu Fonua Tonga 5. Human Rights; Health and Wellbeing; Mr. Moses Ramos, Solomon 6. Economics, Development, Trade and Finance; Mrs Adi Tafunai Samoa 7. Gender and Women’s Rights; CID or ACFID 8. Culture and Identity. Mrs Lorine Tev PIANGO
	15.30- 15.45	Tea- Break	
6	15.45 – 16.30	Plenary - Key Issues in the Pacific and Recommendations by participants on the EPG*	Chair by Drew Havea and Sue Ash

6. Which issues should the Commonwealth focus on over the coming two years?
7. What is the response to the recommendations of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group?
8. How important is civil society to the future of the Commonwealth?

**Day 2, Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2011**

<b>Session</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Facilitator/Speaker</b>
	09.00 - 09.15	<b>Review of Day 1</b>	<b>Zuzanka Kutena CSAC</b>
8	09.15 - 10.45	<b>Trade and Development: Regional challenges and solutions.</b>	Presentation, Adam Wolfenden, Pacific Network on Globalisation; and roundtable broadening discussion chaired by Zuzanka Kutena.
	10.45 - 11.00	<i>Tea Break</i>	
	11.00 -12.30	<b>Policies and Practices: Moving Forward Meaningfully</b>	Groups Facilitated by: 1. Peace and Security - Mr. Moale Vagi, PNG 2. Democracy and Governance; Mrs Jackson Samoa 3. Climate Change and Environment; Kiribati 4. Education, Technology and Innovation; Mr Samiu Fonua Tonga 5. Human Rights; Health and Wellbeing; Mr. Moses Ramos, Solomon 6. Economics, Development, Trade and Finance; Mrs Adi Tafunai Samoa 7. Gender and Women's Rights; CID or ACFID 8. Culture and Identity. Mrs Lorine Tev PIANGO
	12.30 -13.15	<i>Lunch</i>	
9	13.15 – 14.15	Plenary Discussion of Policies and Practices: An Agenda for Positive Change.	Chaired by Drew Havea
10	14.15 – 15.30	Working groups on “Preparation of 1 page statement” by each group*	Groups facilitated by:
		<i>Tea Break</i>	
		Plenary Presentation of 1 page statement by each group	
11		Conclusion, Final Comments and Recommendations, and Vote of Thanks	

**\*Questions for Participants for working groups on 1 page statement:**

1. What are the concerns facing this region and which of these are the most important?
2. How should civil society, government and the Commonwealth respond to the priority concerns?

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**PACIFIC CIVIL SOCIETY DRIVING CHANGE FOR A DYNAMIC COMMONWEALTH:  
PREPARATION FOR CPF CHOGM<sup>6</sup> 2011  
23-24 MAY, 2011  
SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA**

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<sup>6</sup> CPF – Commonwealth People’s Forum

CHOGM – Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

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