

A Commonwealth for the Millennium

The Commonwealth moves into the new millennium strengthened by ties of co-operation and consultation, and reinvigorated by new mandates and delivery mechanisms. There is close consultation and fellow feeling among Commonwealth organisations as they look to the future. The three main intergovernmental agencies – the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) – consult once a year under the umbrella of the Commonwealth Agencies Consultative Committee (CACC).

Their discussions ensure effective liaison, co-ordination and implementation of CHOGM recommendations, and include a wide variety of issues and proposals of common interest, including the implementation of recommendations of review studies. The Commonwealth Secretary-General and his three Deputies, the Director of the Commonwealth Foundation and the President of COL are members of the committee.

Two other organisations, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management Ltd, also interact closely with the Secretariat.

The Commonwealth of Learning

The Secretariat works closely with COL, a distance education and open learning organisation

set up by Heads of Government, to assist member countries meet their human resource development needs.

COL, which celebrated its tenth anniversary in 1999, is utilising the rapidly expanding capacities of information and communication technologies to improve the reach and quality of education and training programmes available in schools, colleges and non-formal education. It also aims to enhance the skills and training of teachers in service. Examples of collaboration between the Secretariat and COL include the development and delivery of training packages for youth workers, legislative drafters, laboratory technicians, and for multi-grade teaching in schools.

The Commonwealth Foundation

The Commonwealth Foundation works closely with the Secretariat in promoting the activities of Commonwealth NGOs, including professional organisations. It runs programmes to assist NGO co-operation and sharing at national, regional and pan-Commonwealth levels, and establishes links with nationally-based NGO networks and umbrella organisations. It also organises the Commonwealth NGO Forum, held every four years.

The Foundation gives financial assistance to about 30 Commonwealth professional associations. These associations provide opportunities for improving and maintaining professional standards, sharing experience and



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Professor Amartya Kumar Sen, who delivered the first Commonwealth Lecture on 'The Commonwealth and Human Rights'

knowledge, and participating in training activities.

Through fellowships to promote Commonwealth understanding, 12 nominees are chosen annually to participate in a one-month programme on Commonwealth affairs. The Foundation also supports festivals, award schemes and prizes in the visual, performing and literary arts, including the annual Commonwealth Writers Prize.

Strategising the Secretariat

The work of the Secretariat, described elsewhere in this Report, continues to be guided by the decisions of Heads of Government and relevant ministerial and fund-governing body meetings. Since the 1997 CHOGM in Edinburgh, the implementation of the Commonwealth Economic Declaration and other mandates from Heads of Government has constituted a major focus of Secretariat activities.

Such has been the demand on the limited resources of the Secretariat to fulfil its mandates, that the role of strategic planning and evaluation has become crucial to ensuring the best and most cost-effective use of these resources.

Planning: Secretariat activities since mid-1997 have been governed by its Third Three-Year Strategic Plan, with 11 programmes and 22 sub-programmes. This Plan ends in mid-2000 and preparations for the Fourth Three-Year Strategic Plan, taking the Secretariat to mid-2003, will be under way by early 2000. Internal task forces have been established to review the programmes and structure of the Secretariat.

Already, the falls in the CFTC Plans of Expenditure have underscored the need for focusing Secretariat projects in areas of comparative advantage and maximum impact, while giving priority to special programmes identified by Heads

The Unofficial Commonwealth

Commonwealth NGOs operate in areas as diverse as education, development co-operation, women's and youth affairs, quality of life, health care and encouraging friendship among people from different Commonwealth countries.

There are about 70 such NGOs. They include influential professional organisations, such as the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association, the Commonwealth Engineers' Council, the Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies, the Commonwealth Medical Association and the Commonwealth Trade Union Council. A full list of Commonwealth NGOs is found on the Secretariat's web site at <http://www.thecommonwealth.org>.



Particular importance is attached to facilitating partnership projects between Secretariat divisions and NGOs when such initiatives will enhance the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of programme delivery. Examples of such partnerships are described in other chapters in this Report.

Professional organisations, such as the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management, and NGOs work in a variety of areas. The Secretariat attaches great importance to facilitating partnership projects with them

of Government and Ministers, usually in response to contemporary developments.

A number of cross-programme considerations have been worked into the planning process. Priority is given to the process of engendering Secretariat programmes and internal strategy consultations. Gender planning workshops to strengthen gender awareness skills have been organised for programme staff, and before major conferences staff from all divisions meet to discuss a common strategy. Post-conference debriefing sessions ensure that outcomes are also discussed.

To introduce Commonwealth diplomats taking up postings in London to the role of the Commonwealth and its institutions, the Secretariat in collaboration with the Commonwealth Foundation organises an annual Induction Programme for Commonwealth Diplomats. The Secretariat also collaborates with the Foundation

and other Commonwealth organisations in holding the recently instituted annual Commonwealth Lecture Series. The first lecture was delivered by Professor Amartya Kumar Sen, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, on 7 May 1998 on the theme 'The Commonwealth and Human Rights'. The second was delivered by Mr Malcolm Fraser, former Prime Minister of Australia, on 13 May 1999 on 'The Nation State and Globalisation'.

Studies and papers have been produced on a number of issues, such as Secretariat work priorities, performance reporting, mobilisation of extra-budgetary resources and Commonwealth representation outside the UK. Arrangements have also been made for divisional Directors to informally discuss future strategic priorities at an annual Retreat.

Evaluation: Secretariat programmes undergo periodical evaluation. The Review of Political Programmes, carried out



Mr Malcolm Fraser delivered the second Commonwealth Lecture on 'The Nation State and Globalisation'

Links with Parliamentarians

The Secretariat maintains cordial and close relations with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), which links members of parliament or national assemblies in all Commonwealth countries.

In June 1998, the Secretariat convened jointly with the CPA the first in a new series of *Deepening Democracy* workshops whose theme was 'The Role of the Opposition'. Its purpose was to achieve a better understanding of the mutual rights and responsibilities of governing and opposition parties (see Chapter 2). The CPA has also collaborated with the Secretariat in the organisation of several regional workshops on gender and democracy, peace and conflict resolution (see Chapter 14).

The CPA Secretary-General makes recommendations to the Commonwealth Secretary-General regarding parliamentarians of high standing who may be considered for inclusion in Commonwealth Observer Groups (see Chapter 2).

Parliamentarians from the Commonwealth meet Her Majesty The Queen at a Commonwealth Day reception



by Ambassador Henry Sekyi of Ghana, was concluded in May 1998; it commended the Secretariat's work in this area and made some recommendations for fine-tuning.

At the same time, a major evaluation study of projects in the science and technology programme, carried out by Mr Clive Palmer of New Zealand, was concluded. His findings triggered a major review of the programme by the Commonwealth Science Council in early 1999 (see Chapter 13). Following a request from Commonwealth Ministers responsible for Youth Affairs in 1998, a management and administration review of the Commonwealth Youth Programme was concluded in 1999. In November 1998, the Secretary-General initiated an internal rethink of the CFTC, and this was completed in June 1999. The report of the CFTC

rethink was widely welcomed by governments, and its recommendations are being implemented.

Since mid-1997, two major evaluation studies covering the Secretariat's technical assistance to the Caribbean and South Pacific regions have also been concluded. Recommendations are being implemented and are reflected in the CFTC rethink proposals. Two smaller studies on the Commonwealth Industrial Training and Experience Programme and the Technical Support Group for Women and Health were also completed. A study of the Secretariat's activities in environment is in the process of being finalised.

A recurring theme in several evaluation studies has been the need to provide greater support and information to Commonwealth points of contact in member governments.

This was reiterated at the Senior Officials Meeting in London in November 1998. The Secretariat has now circulated a manual on its programmes of assistance as a practical source of information to all points of contact.

The evaluation 'culture' is becoming more entrenched in Secretariat operations. An evaluation study on Internal Procedures for Project Administration by Dr Basil Cracknell was completed in October 1997. Among other things, it recommended that an internal audit be instituted in the Secretariat on a regular basis – and this is now being implemented. In common with many international organisations, the Secretariat is moving towards a results-based approach in planning and implementing its projects, involving the logical framework as a tool for design and monitoring. Training of staff in these skills has begun.

Partners in Progress

The Secretariat interacts closely with the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management Ltd (CPTM) which was registered in 1995 as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. The link is an historical one, the CPTM having started out within the Secretariat's work programme as the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Technology Management in 1989.

The CPTM's remit is based on technology management and the promotion of public/private sector partnerships. It has worked with the Governments of Botswana, Cyprus, Malaysia, Mauritius and Zimbabwe in 'vision' exercises for strategic development; been involved in training in quality management to ISO 9000 standard in the Caribbean; and also involved in the establishment of



Zimbabwe's Scientific and Industrial Research and Development Centre which brings private and public sectors together in new research and development ventures.

CPTM's initiatives attach high priority to the new wave of economic developments based on a knowledge-driven economy. Examination of issues these raise in relation to partnerships between government, business and labour will continue to form the main platform for CPTM's advisory work. For developing countries in particular, assistance and advice in the management of technology will boost competitiveness in a knowledge-driven economy.