

India and the Commonwealth

Background

1. Since the London Declaration of 1949, which established the modern Commonwealth, India has held a pivotal position in this voluntary association of 54 independent sovereign states. It was India's decision in 1948, as a newly independent Republic, to remain in the Commonwealth which influenced other Asian and African countries to join the organisation and which opened the era of the modern Commonwealth. Since then, it was firmly established that joining the Commonwealth no longer necessarily involved continued allegiance to the British Crown. At the same time the word 'British' was dropped from the association's title to reflect the Commonwealth's changing character.

2. In 1965, the leaders of the Commonwealth established the Commonwealth Secretariat in London, which became the association's independent civil service, headed by a Secretary-General. India was instrumental, as a part of group of half a dozen nations, led by Ghana, in the creation of the Secretariat arguing strongly for a neutral and impartial body to replace the mechanism hitherto provided by the British government. A year later, the Commonwealth Foundation was launched to assist the growing number of Commonwealth professional associations and, subsequently, NGOs. In 1971, the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) was created, which advanced the idea of technical co-operation among developing countries.

3. India is the largest member state of the Commonwealth, with nearly 60% of the total population of the association. It is the fourth largest contributor to the Commonwealth budgets and programmes. It provides the largest number of technical experts engaged by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation extending assistance to developing Commonwealth countries after the UK.

4. India is a member of key Commonwealth bodies, including the Steering Committee on Commonwealth Connects, the Standing Committee on Terrorism, Commonwealth Advisory Board on Sports, Grants Committee of Commonwealth Foundation as well as the Executive and Accreditation Committees of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Board of Governors.

5. India/ eminent Indians have been members of important special committees set up by the Commonwealth from time to time, for instance, the Intergovernmental Group on Criteria for Commonwealth Membership set up following the 1995 CHOGM; the Mandates Committee set up in 2003 to review the mandates of Commonwealth organisations; the Commonwealth High Level Review Group constituted at 1999 CHOGM to review the role of the

Commonwealth and advise on how best it could respond to challenges of the new century; and Commonwealth Expert Group on Democracy and Development set up following the Coolom CHOGM in 2002. More recently, Shri Yashwant Sinha, former EAM was a member of the Committee on Commonwealth Membership and Prof. Amartya Sen was the Chair of the Commission on Respect and Understanding.

6. India hosted CHOGM in 1983 in New Delhi and the annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference in 1957, 1975, 1991 and 2007. India successfully hosted the 2008 Commonwealth Youth Games in Pune and the 2010 Commonwealth Games in New Delhi. India also hosted the Conference of Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers in January 2010 in New Delhi.

Significance of the Commonwealth for India

7. For its part, the Commonwealth is a natural constituency for India. It is a community of English speaking countries. It has a preponderance of developing countries, most of which avidly seek assistance on a South-South basis. It is an association which puts a premium on democracy and good governance, where India has so much to share with others. It provides a platform to interact and build consensus with a very diverse group of countries, including G-8 countries like the UK and Canada, key developing countries like South Africa, Nigeria and Malaysia, and a plethora of Small States.

8. The Commonwealth is a unique international organisation with the bulk of its membership coming from 32 Small States. There is a great degree of genuine appreciation among these States for India as the largest and a vibrant democracy and for the high-tech advancement and economic progress India has achieved in the past decade and a half. At the same time, India's contacts with this large member of Small States are few and far-between. India does not have resident Missions in 23 Commonwealth states. Unlike the UN where these States find more options in terms of rich donor countries like Japan and Germany, the Commonwealth provides a useful and unique platform for India to capitalise on this sense of goodwill.

9. A large number of Commonwealth countries also have a sizeable Indian population. We have a strong interest in promoting, maintaining and strengthening healthy democratic institutions and the rule of law as well as the prevention of conflict in these countries, as well as in the Commonwealth countries of South Asia.

10. There are, of course, politically-inconvenient, lingering stereotypes about the Commonwealth being Anglo-centric, reinforced by the Queen being the Head of the Commonwealth. However, the reality is that the UK is now only one player,

albeit a major one, in the Commonwealth. Countries like Canada and Australia now play just as large a role. The Commonwealth now has a Chairperson-in-Office (the Head of Government of the last host of CHOGM), which serves to further 'dilute' the figurehead role of the Queen.

11. The Commonwealth has a very healthy tradition of not permitting bilateral disputes between member states to be brought up in its councils. However, the continuation of this code of procedure cannot simply be taken for granted as there is sustained pressure from certain quarters to alter this.

12. The Commonwealth straddles the North-South divide in the world with an immense diversity of races, religions, cultures, geographical spread and stages of development. It is thus a useful forum for dialogue and promoting understanding on global issues and forging consensus on a smaller scale than the UN.

13. Though the UN remains the principal forum for multilateral action, certainly the main custodian of international peace and security, the Commonwealth is suitably placed to address many concerns, especially of its smaller members, through its unique style of functioning based on consensus, informality and goodwill. The informal ways in which dialogue is conducted and decisions arrived at in Commonwealth bodies provide an excellent chance of winning wider support. The overall impact of this sense of family is that the Commonwealth is perceived by its members as discreet and non-threatening. The CHOGM summits, through the Retreat Sessions, provide an opportunity for the leaders to interact informally in a more relaxed atmosphere.

14. Given India's broader global engagement, the Commonwealth will continue to be a useful vehicle for projecting our global aspirations. India's activism within the Commonwealth and supportiveness of its initiatives represents an important opportunity to dispel any notion of a distance arising between a rising India and its erstwhile constituency.

Membership of the Commonwealth

15. The majority of the Commonwealth's members are developing countries who comprise 50 of its 54 members. 32 of the Commonwealth's members are small states, defined as those states having a population of 1.5 million or less.

16. All member states, except Mozambique and Cameroon which joined in 1995 and Rwanda in 2009 have experienced direct or indirect British rule, or have been linked administratively to another Commonwealth country. At the 1997 summit in Edinburgh, Heads of Government agreed that in order to become a member of the Commonwealth, an applicant country should, as a rule, have had a constitutional association with an existing Commonwealth member state, that it should comply with Commonwealth values, principles and priorities as set out in the Harare Declaration; and that it should accept Commonwealth norms and conventions. This was overtaken by the Committee on Commonwealth Membership's

recommendations on the criteria and process for membership, which were adopted by Leaders at the 2007 CHOGM in Kampala. Accordingly, the core criteria for Membership are:

(a) an applicant country should, as a general rule, have had a historic constitutional association with an existing Commonwealth member, save in exceptional circumstances; (b) in exceptional circumstances, applications should be considered on a case-by-case basis; (c) an applicant country should accept and comply with Commonwealth fundamental values, principles, and priorities as set out in the 1971 Declaration of Commonwealth Principles and contained in other subsequent Declarations; (d) an applicant country must demonstrate commitment to: democracy and democratic processes, including free and fair elections and representative legislatures; the rule of law and independence of the judiciary; good governance, including a well-trained public service and transparent public accounts; and protection of human rights, freedom of expression, and equality of opportunity; (e) an applicant country should accept Commonwealth norms and conventions, such as the use of the English language as the medium of inter-Commonwealth relations, and acknowledge Queen Elizabeth II as the Head of the Commonwealth; and (f) new members should be encouraged to join the Commonwealth Foundation, and to promote vigorous civil society and business organisations within their countries, and to foster participatory democracy through regular civil society consultations.

CHOGM

17. Between 1944 and the early 1960s, the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' meeting were held almost every year in London. From 1971, the term Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) was adopted to encompass both Presidents and Prime Ministers. CHOGM summits have been held every two years since then in different countries by rotation, the last in Perth, Australia in October 2011.

18. After the 2003 Abuja Summit, Commonwealth leaders felt the need to review the CHOGM format for the future. It was felt that their agenda was crowded with too many issues, most of which could be dealt by their Foreign Ministers. It was decided then that the Foreign Ministers will meet separately prior to the CHOGM. The first Foreign Ministers meeting at CHOGM was held in Malta in November 2005. The practise of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers meeting on the sidelines of the UNGA, however, still continues, and is mainly utilised to have preliminary discussions on some of the agenda items for the Summit and also to confirm the agenda for the Summit and pre-CHOGM Foreign Ministers meeting.

19. The Last CHOGM was held in Perth, Australia from 28-30 October 2011. Hon'ble Vice President led India's delegation to the Summit. The theme of the 2011 CHOGM was "Building National Resilience, Building Global Resilience". During the Summit, the following documents were adopted:

- (a) Perth Communiqué
- (b) Strengthening the Role of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG)
- (c) Perth Declaration on Food Security Principles
- (d) Agreement by Heads of Government Regarding the Eminent Persons Group Proposals: A Commonwealth of the People – Time for Urgent Reform

20. India played an active and constructive role at the 2011 CHOGM especially on the Report on Eminent Persons Groups (EPG) recommendations. Shri Kamalesh Sharma was re-elected unanimously at the Perth CHOGM in 2011 to serve his second 4 year tenure from April 2012.

21. The 2013 CHOGM is scheduled to take place in Colombo, Sri Lanka from 15 – 17 November. The theme for CHOGM 2013 is: 'Growth with Equity – Inclusive Development.'

Political issues

22. Good governance, conflict prevention and resolution, and human rights have assumed greater importance in the Commonwealth's work over the years. Discussions on these issues have however, been contentious. Developing Commonwealth countries have argued that, even though a worthy objective, good governance has never clearly defined, and it was not something that could be pursued at the cost of the assistance they needed for economic development. Similarly, although there is agreement that the good offices role of the Commonwealth Secretary General (CSG) should be strengthened, consensus over the creation of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group proved hard to achieve. The diversion of the Commonwealth's budget from developmental to political goals has also brought out the divide between the developing and developed countries, raising questions whether the Commonwealth is losing relevance for a majority of its members. At the 2003 Abuja CHOGM, there was recognition among heads of the need to restore the balance in favour of development.

The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG)

23. The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) was established at the 1995 CHOGM in Auckland to deal with serious or persistent violations of the Harare Declaration, which lays down the Commonwealth's fundamental political values. The Group is convened by the Commonwealth Secretary-General and is made up of Foreign Ministers from nine Member States. It is reconfigured at each CHOGM after a process of Consultations carried out by the Commonwealth Secretary General. Presently, its composition is Australia, Bangladesh (Chair), Canada, Jamaica, Maldives, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago and Vanuatu.

24. At the 2009 CHOGM in Port of Spain, Heads of Government agreed that consideration be given to strengthening the role of CMAG, in order to enable the Group to deal with the full range of serious or persistent violations of the Harare Principles. They also noted the decision of CMAG to constitute a working group of its own member states to look into how its work may be further refined and elaborated to make it more effective, in consultation with other member states, and make proposals on this matter to the wider membership. Subsequently, the Report on Strengthening the role of CMAG was approved by the Leaders at CHOGM 2011. The revised and enhanced mandate provided to CMAG in this report enables CMAG to play a proactive role in situations not only involving the undemocratic overthrow of regimes (a coup) but also in situations which do not result in such coups but still involve serious and persistent violations of the Commonwealth's values and principles. Since the new report was adopted, apart from Fiji (which is a longstanding case on CMAG's agenda) the issue that has been on CMAG's agenda was the Maldives.

25. The Commonwealth is the only international organisation which has suspended its members for violation of its basic values of democracy and good governance. Such action is taken by CMAG. Nigeria in 1995 and Sierra Leone in 1997 were suspended from the Commonwealth and later reinstated. Zimbabwe was suspended in March 2002, until it chose to withdraw from the Commonwealth in December 2003. Pakistan, which was suspended from the Councils of Commonwealth following a military coup in 1999, was brought back to the fold of Commonwealth in May 2004. It was again suspended in 2007 and reinstated after the elections in 2008. Fiji's military regime was suspended in December 2006 and fully suspended from the Commonwealth on 1 September 2009 for failing to meeting the dead line set by CMAG to reactivate the President's Political Dialogue Forum process. It continues to be suspended from the Commonwealth.

The Good Offices Role of the Commonwealth Secretary General

26. Conflict prevention and resolution within the Commonwealth has been dealt with through quiet diplomacy, the CSG's good offices and consensus-building. Flowing from the Coolum mandate, the CSG has special envoys offering good offices in several Commonwealth countries. At present these countries include Fiji,

Gambia, Lesotho, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Swaziland and Zambia. The work in this field is mainly dominated by ABC countries that have created a voluntary Good Offices Fund with contributions from Australia and the UK. The Good Offices role has produced some appreciable results in facilitating dialogue between key stakeholders, promoting agreement on contentious political issues and constitutional and electoral reforms in the trouble spots.

Election Observation

27. This has become an important aspect of the Commonwealth's work. However, observer missions have not always been impartial; there had been a clear bias in two major missions in 2002 – to Zimbabwe and Pakistan. In both cases, the reports of the Commonwealth observers were in marked variance with those of other organisations that had reported on the same elections. On Zimbabwe, the Commonwealth was far harsher than others, while on Pakistan, it was much softer. In both cases, the observers responded to the political requirements of the ABC countries. Nevertheless, Commonwealth election observation missions are non-intrusive and are sent only at the specific request of the host government and have generally enjoyed greater credibility compared to similar other missions.

28. Some of the engagements by the Commonwealth as Election Observer since the 2011 CHOGM are:- (i) General and Regional elections in Guyana- November 2011 (ii) Parliamentary Elections in Lesotho – May 2012 (iii) National elections in Papua New Guinea- June-July 2012 (iv) National and Local Council elections in Sierra Leone (v) Presidential and Parliamentary elections in Ghana- December 2012 (vi) General elections in Grenada- February 2013 (vii) General elections in Kenya- March 2013 (viii) General elections in Pakistan- May 2013 (ix) Northern Provincial elections in Sri Lanka- September 2013 and (x) Presidential elections in Maldives (first round)- September 2013.

29. India showcased its electoral management capabilities during a conference of the Chief Election Officers of Commonwealth countries held in New Delhi in February 2005. Chief Electoral Officers from 33 Commonwealth countries who attended the Conference paid tribute to India's credentials in democracy and electoral management.

30. Commonwealth Network of National Election Management Bodies has been set up in 2010. Heads of national election management bodies of Commonwealth Member-States had their first meeting in Accra, Ghana on 19-21 May 2010. The meeting was hosted by the Electoral Commission of Ghana and convened by the Commonwealth Secretariat. India was represented by the Chief Election Commissioner, Shri Navin Chawla. Shri Navin Chawla also attended a Commonwealth National Election Management Bodies meeting in London on 16 July 2010.

31. The 1st meeting of the CEN Steering Committee was held in London on 13th July, 2010. The second meeting of the Network's Steering Committee was held in London in July 2011. The Third Meeting in Toronto, held in June, 2012 was attended by Election Commissioner, Mr. H.S. Brahma and Director General, Mr. Akshay Rout. The Biennial Conference of the CEN was also held in Toronto in June 2012.

32. The first Working Group Meeting of CEN "Voter's Education and Electoral Participation" was held in New Delhi on 16-17 June, 2011 under the chairmanship of Election Commission of India. The representatives from Electoral Management Bodies of South Africa, Kenya and Officials from Commonwealth Secretariat, London participated in the two-day meeting. Mr. Akshay Rout, Director General chaired the Working Group.

33. The Commonwealth's Electoral Management Group has entrusted the responsibility of training all its officials in the field of electoral management to India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) set up under the auspices of the Election Commission of India. The initiative aims at training and support to Young Election Administrators. The pilot event of Young Election Professionals (JEP) was held in New Delhi from 21-26 October 2013 in which 28 electoral officials from the Commonwealth participated.

The Role of Civil Society

34. Another area of the Commonwealth's focus is the relationship between the official and the unofficial Commonwealth. Given the proliferation of Commonwealth NGOs, India had expressed reservations on unfettered NGO accreditation to the CHOGMs, and counselled caution and need to be selective so that the intergovernmental character of Commonwealth meetings is not compromised. This is now being addressed through re-accreditation of the Commonwealth organisations, professional associations and NGOs.

35. In general, there has been appreciation in the Commonwealth of the role played by the civil society, although concerns have been also expressed over the hidden agendas of some of the NGOs, dubious sources of their funding, as well as lack of accountability in the functioning of many NGOs and un-representativeness of their voice as compared to the governments.

36. The Commonwealth conducts extensive consultations with the civil society on major issues and also provides them an opportunity to provide inputs for various Commonwealth ministerial meetings, each involving civil society in a different way. This can include any or all of full consultation in the lead up to the meeting, receipt

of papers, submission of CSO briefs and papers, participation as observers in plenary sessions and as full participants in working sessions and roundtables. CSOs accredited to the Commonwealth may apply for accreditation to CHOGM, which allows them to receive CHOGM papers, submit briefs and papers, special consultation with the Committee of the Whole, and a round table meeting with a representative group of Foreign Ministers at the CHOGM. The Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Foundation co-host civil society consultations twice a year for CSOs accredited to the Commonwealth and selected CSOs involved in areas of work relevant to the agenda of the meeting. As a special gesture, separate session on engagements for the CSO's with Foreign Ministers is also now scheduled during CHOGM.

Scale of assessed contribution to Commonwealth Secretariat

37. During the 2007 Kampala CHOGM, Heads of Government had acknowledged that members assessed scales of contribution to the Commonwealth Secretariat had not been reviewed since 1989 and had accordingly agreed that the Scales should be revised in line with the three principles of: relative capacity to pay; equitable burden sharing; and shared ownership (the three core principles). The Heads of Government had also agreed that the revised Scale should be phased in over a three year period, starting in 2007/08 and that the Scale should be subject to regular review every five years.

38. Based on the above, the Commonwealth Secretariat had tabled a proposed new Scale of assessment for members to consider. Its key features included: increasing the level of the ceiling from 30% to 31%; 'capping' members that would contribute over 10% of the budget to limit their contribution to either 75% of the ceiling or their extrapolated UN rate (whichever is the lowest); reducing the level of the floor from 0.32% to 0.21% and introducing a 'phase-in-limitation' provision to limit the level of the increase of any members, contribution during any single review to 100%; and the application of the scale to 1 July 2008 in line with the 2007 CHOGM mandate. A Working Group was constituted with representatives from Australia, Canada, India, Malaysia, Mozambique, Brunei Darussalam, New Zealand, Nigeria, Singapore, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago and the UK. The Working Group submitted its report to the Heads during CHOGM 2009. The new revised scale of contributions has been implemented. India's assessed contribution for the year 2013-14 is GBP 658,107. The budget of the Commonwealth Secretariat for the year 2013-14 is GBP 16 million.

The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation

39. The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) is the principal means by which the Commonwealth delivers development assistance to member countries. Established by Commonwealth Heads of Government in 1971 to put the

skills of member countries at each other's disposal, the CFTC operates on the principle of mutual assistance, with member governments contributing financing on a voluntary basis and obtaining technical assistance as needed.

40. India's voluntary contribution to the CFTC had steadily increased from 1991 (£400,000) to £720,000 in 1998 and remained stable thereafter till 2004-05. India increased her contribution to £800,000 in 2005-06 and £850,000 in 2006-07. Thereafter, India's contribution has increased by £50,000 each year and reached GBP 1 million in 2009-10 which has since been maintained. This, however, still remains, in overall terms, a small proportion of the approximate GBP 29 million Fund as well as relatively small as compared to contributions by UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

41. India provides a comparatively large number of long-term experts to various CFTC programmes, which is the largest proportion of CFTC experts provided by any developing country in the Commonwealth and second only to the United Kingdom. The contribution made by Indian experts in various fields is greatly appreciated by the beneficiary states and provides an excellent example of South-South cooperation.

42. The Heads of Government at Malta CHOGM expressed their concern at the progressive decline in the real resources of the CFTC over the years and noted that this was affecting its ability to assist member countries, especially Small States and LDCs to attend MDGs by supporting pro-poor policies for economic growth and sustainable development. They endorsed the Secretary General's call for increase in contributions to the CFTC by 6% per annum in real terms for each of the next five years. India has successfully executed the pledge made by Heads of Government at the Malta CHOGM in 2005 to voluntarily increase CFTC contributions by 6% per annum in real terms for the next five years five years which led us to reach the figure of GBP 1 million.

43. In the recent past, the CFTC programmes in India have declined both in numbers and in budget. India, however, is now placed in a happy position where we do not need CFTC assistance as much as other developing and Small States Commonwealth countries do. This, for India, is a healthy sign since India is gradually but steadily being seen as an exporter of technology and expertise.

The Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP)

44. The Commonwealth is the only intergovernmental organisation to have a dedicated youth programme. The guiding principle of The CYP is that young people possess the drive, ability, and potential to help both themselves and their communities. Through its London headquarters and regional centres in Australia, Guyana, India (Chandigarh) and Zambia, it strengthens National Youth Ministries,

provides training to youth development workers, and helps young people to receive education and training and start and run their own businesses. The CYP is also responsible for organising the Commonwealth Youth Forum on the sidelines of CHOGM.

45. India is the third largest contributor to the budget of the CYP. India accounts for the two-third of the Commonwealth youth population in Asia which totals 600 million. It hosts one of the four CYP regional centres in Chandigarh as 'Centre of Excellence'. Many of the CYP pilot projects are initiated in India. Through partnerships with the private sector, a Technology Empowerment Centre in India has been established, which offers affordable courses in programming and e-commerce. India's assessed contribution for CYP for the year 2013-14 is GBP 119,138. The budget of the Commonwealth Secretariat for the year 2013-14 is GBP 3 million.

46. The Commonwealth Youth Programme Asia Centre is located in Chandigarh, India and is one of four Centres established to serve the member countries of the Commonwealth. The Asia Centre responds to youth development for 8 countries of the Commonwealth. These 8 countries together have a total population of 1.4 billion people. Approximately one-third of the budget of the Asian office in Chandigarh is utilised in India, while the remaining is equitably distributed between other member countries including Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Maldives, Bangladesh, Brunei and Singapore. At the meeting of the Commonwealth Youth Ministers in the Bahamas in May 2006, they mandated that CYP Asia Centre, in association with sister organizations in the region, will be a focal centre for co-operation and learning in the field of youth and local government under the programme area of Governance, Development and Youth Networks.

47. The 2010 Commonwealth Youth Leaders' Conference was held in Chandigarh on 16 December, 2010 with the participation of about 40 delegates from all regions of the Commonwealth. The conference was inaugurated by Shivraj Patil, the Governor of Punjab and Administrator of Chandigarh. Deputy Secretary General Mmasekgoa Masire-Mwamba, who oversees Youth Affairs at the Commonwealth Secretariat, gave the keynote address. The delegates voted to elect the chair and deputy-chair of the Pan-Commonwealth Youth Caucus. Noelyn Wagapu from Solomon Islands and Rebecca Solomon from Vanuatu were elected as chair and vice-chair respectively of the Commonwealth Youth Caucus.

48. Commonwealth Secretariat has been working on the restructuring of the operating model of CYP. For this purpose, the Secretariat has been in touch with our Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and has conveyed that as per them the optimal model would be shutting down of the 4 regional centres, a consolidation of most staff positions in London with a small presence maintained in each region and hosted within the Youth Ministry. Welcoming the need for restructuring of the CYP particularly in the context of financial constrains, our Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports have agreed to the Secretariat's proposal to retain one representative

official in India to coordinate the activities of CYP. The Ministry of Youth Affairs and sports also conveyed to the Secretariat our readiness to provide necessary office space to the representative official.

Commonwealth Advisory Body on Sports (CABOS)

49. CABOS has been formed by a decision of the Abuja CHOGM, by which CHOGM Committee on Cooperation through Sport (CCCS) was dissolved and reconfigured as an advisory body. It was formally established following the endorsement of its mandates by the Commonwealth Sports Minister during their meeting in Athens in August 2004. The group, in its annual report to Commonwealth Sports Ministers, is expected to provide input and advice on specific policy issues in order to promote sport as a tool for economic and social development. CABOS meets once a year. Every other year, the meeting is held on the eve of the Commonwealth Sports Ministers meetings in the margins of the Commonwealth and summer Olympic Games. The Body consists of 12 regional representatives. Shri Onkar Kedia, Joint Secretary, Department of Sports participated in the CABOS in August, 2013 in London.

Commonwealth Small States Office in New York

50. For many of the 32 Small States in the Commonwealth, next to their respective regional organisations and in some cases large bilateral benefactors, the Commonwealth is the most important multilateral body in terms of technical assistance. It has championed their causes over many years; has put them high on the global agenda, including the World Bank's agenda and has often provided them the type of assistance they do not manage to get elsewhere.

51. One of the Commonwealth's flagship and most successful small states initiatives is the Commonwealth Joint office for Small States Permanent Missions in New York. The Joint Office is a shared, serviced office, home to the Permanent Missions to the UN for 12 small state members of the Commonwealth. The twelve small states that currently have Permanent Representatives working from the New York Office are Dominica, The Gambia, Grenada, Maldives, Nauru, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, the Seychelles, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Kiribati. The Office has allowed Commonwealth small states to overcome resource constraints and other limitations in order to have an effective presence at the UNHQ and engage meaningfully with the UN system. At present, it is funded by Australia, Canada, India, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and the United Kingdom. Those who occupy the Office remain highly supportive of it.

52. India has been one of the principal donors for the Joint Office since 1997-98. The contribution increased from USD 15000 p.a. to USD 75000 p.a. during 1999-

2000. Considering the importance of the Joint Office to the Small States and the current uncertainties it is passing through in view of escalation of rental prices, we have increased our contribution to USD 100,000 p.a. from 2007-08.

Commonwealth Small States Office in Geneva

53. The Kampala communiqué in 2007 called for establishment of a Commonwealth Small States Office in Geneva. India agreed to contribute USD 80000 p.a. for their office since 2009-10. At present, the Geneva office is funded by Australia, India, New Zealand and Singapore.

The Commonwealth Action Programme for the Digital Divide (CAPDD)/The Commonwealth Connects Programme

54. In 2002, an Expert Group on Information Technology, established under the Commonwealth's High Level Review Group examined the growing economic and social importance of information and communication technologies (ICTs), and its implications for the development goals and prospects of Commonwealth countries. Its report, 'A Commonwealth Action Programme for the Digital Divide', contained a set of proposals regarding the use of these technologies to accelerate development as well as the most effective means of reducing the potential for a "digital divide" that would hinder access to the many social and economic benefits of ICTs. The report was endorsed by the Heads of Government at Cologno in 2002.

55. The Heads of Government at CHOGM 2005 in Malta revisited this issue and adopted Malta Declaration on Networking the Commonwealth for Development which endorsed CAPDD and requested the Secretary General to establish a steering committee including representatives of member states, relevant Commonwealth agencies, and civil society to work with the Commonwealth Secretariat in implementing the Action Programme. They also endorsed the establishment of a special Fund, and called for contributions, to enable implementation of the specific activities and to achieve the performance targets envisaged in the Action Programme.

56. The top 3 priority goals/performance targets of the programme are: (i) Ensuring that there are mature ICT strategies in developing member countries; (ii) Developing and implementing mechanisms for sharing the intellectual ICT assets of the Commonwealth; and (iii) Supporting the delivery of projects and activities to bridge the digital divide in member countries. The Programme focuses on 5 specialised areas: (i) Policy Development & Regulatory Capacity; (ii) Modernising Education & Skills Development; (iii) Entrepreneurship for Poverty Reduction; (iv)

Promoting Local Access & Connectivity; and (v) Regional Networks, Local Content & Knowledge.

57. India took a lead role in the endorsement of the Programme at the Malta CHOGM with a view that India's expertise in ICTs can play a key role in these initiatives. Most of the beneficiaries of this programme will be the Commonwealth developing countries in Africa and the Small States. The Malta Declaration noted with appreciation the substantial contributions to the Fund announced by India (Euro 1 million) and Malta (Maltese Lira 50000).

58. In pursuance of the Malta CHOGM Mandate, the Secretary General appointed a Steering Committee led by Dr. Michael Frendo, Foreign Minister of Malta, and invited ICT Ministers (or their representatives) of India, Trinidad and Tobago and Mozambique and CEOs of the relevant Commonwealth agencies to become members of the Committee. The Committee decided in July 2006 to rebrand Commonwealth Action Programme for the Digital Divide (CAPDD) as Commonwealth Connects Programme (CCP).

59. Later in 2008-09, the Commonwealth Secretariat explored a project on a Commonwealth Partnership Platform Portal (CP-3) or an online web platform to facilitate members to access, through a single window, the wealth of knowledge in the Commonwealth family. The CP-3 was aimed at providing an efficient information communications and interactive tool, which members of the Commonwealth community could use to advance key Commonwealth goals and values. The first phase of the project was completed in 2009 by Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), the external consultants to the project. The CP3 project is divided in 3 phases. India contributed a sum of £104000 towards Phase I of the project.

60. The Commonwealth Partnership Platform Portal (CP-3) project has been now been re-launched as the Commonwealth Connects, a secure, cloud-based online platform and collaborative web workspace to facilitate inter-governmental linkages as well as pan-Commonwealth interaction among individuals, institutions and practitioners. The Commonwealth Secretariat has identified the medium-term resource requirements for Commonwealth Connects at GBP 2,100,000 over a period of 4 years and is looking for strong contribution from India towards this.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

61. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) links members of national and state parliaments across the Commonwealth encompassing approximately 175 national and state or provincial parliaments. The CPA aims to provide a forum for discussion on matters of common parliamentary interest, to disseminate information on parliamentary institutions and spread knowledge on constitutional, legislative; economic, social and cultural issues. It accomplishes its

objectives through activities comprising workshops, conferences, training seminars; technical assistance to specific countries; and publications programme. It holds annual parliamentary conferences where MPs exchange views on major political issues of the year, as well as parliamentary structures and problems.

62. The 53rd CPA Conference was held in New Delhi in September 2007. India has, in the past, hosted annual CPA conferences in 1957, 1975 and 1991. The last meeting of the CPA was held in Johannesburg, South Africa from 28 August to 06 September 2013. Smt. Meira Kumar, Speaker of Lok Sabha was to lead the Indian delegation to that meeting but had to cancel it due to extension of the Monsoon Session of Parliament.

63. India hosted the Conference of Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers on 4-7 January 2010 in New Delhi. Smt. Meira Kumar, Speaker of Lok Sabha, who is an Acting Regional Representative from CPA India Union, was nominated as delegate to General Assembly for the period 2009-12 during the CPA conference in Arusha, Tanzania. Smt. Meira Kumar presided over the 57th CPA Conference held in London from 21-28 July 2011.

Commonwealth Games 2010

64. The XIX Commonwealth Games were held in New Delhi, from 3-14 October 2010, marking the first time the Games were hosted by India. The Commonwealth Games which began as the British Empire Games in 1930 in Hamilton, Canada have now been hosted 19 times by eight countries and 17 different cities. About 7000 athletes from 71 Commonwealth nations and territories participated in the Delhi Games. India, by winning 101 medals, including 38 gold medals, gave its strongest performance ever in the history of Commonwealth Games to emerge as the second highest medal winner behind Australia. Commonwealth Secretary General Shri Kamlesh Sharma visited India from 2-15 October 2010 in connection with the XIX Commonwealth Games.

65. The Queen's Baton Relay Launch for the Commonwealth Games Delhi 2010 had earlier taken place on 29 October 2009 at Buckingham Palace where it was launched by Her Majesty the Queen in the presence of the President of India during her State visit to the UK from 27 to 29 October 2009. The Baton Relay passed through all the 71 Commonwealth Member States and territories, covering a distance of more than 190,000 Kilometres in 340 days. It concluded at the opening ceremony of the XIX CWG in Delhi where the Queen's message was removed from the baton and read aloud, officially opening the Games.

Commonwealth Foundation

66. The Commonwealth Foundation is an intergovernmental organisation, resourced by and reporting to Commonwealth governments. Founded in 1965, its mandate is to strengthen civil society and enhance its contribution in the Commonwealth. It is guided by Commonwealth values and priorities as ascribed in the 1971 Singapore Declaration, the 1991 Harare Declaration and the 2003 Aso Rock Declaration on Development and Democracy 2003. The Foundation is the only intergovernmental organisation in the world with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) formally integrated into its key governance structures. It is advised by a Civil Society Advisory Committee of 15 CSOs from around the Commonwealth which meets twice a year. Five members of the CSAC are members of the Foundation's Board of Governors which meets annually. Two CSAC members are members of its Executive Committee which meets twice a year. India is a member of the Executive and Grants Committees of the Commonwealth Foundation. The Foundation works closely with several voluntary organisations in India.

67. The main purpose of the Foundation is to enhance participation of professional and other civil society organisations (CSOs) in the achievement of Commonwealth objectives, in particular democracy, sustainable development and cultural understanding. It accomplishes its objectives through grant making to CSOs; raising visibility of CSO contribution to development and good governance; improving the operating environment for and effectiveness of Civil Society; facilitating partnerships; providing awards, prizes and fellowships in fields of Arts and Culture; providing core and activity based funding to established Commonwealth professional associations; policy and practice advocacy through presenting reports and advice to governments at Ministerial and Heads of Government Meetings; publications; and annual Commonwealth lecture to promote better public understanding of the Commonwealth.

68. The Foundation organises the Commonwealth People's Forum (CPF) on the sidelines of CHOGM to provide opportunities for networking and interaction among civil society organizations in the host country and in the Commonwealth, and to showcase the work and contribution of these organizations to the fundamental principles and values of the Commonwealth.

69. The Foundation has undertaken a thorough review of its grants scheme in order to further improve the effectiveness of the scheme in light of increasing demand and has taken active steps to increase the level of grants provided to the Pacific region. The Foundation is also doing commendable work in the area of sustainable fisheries management, particularly in Southern Africa where a large number of people's livelihoods are based on artisan fishing.

70. Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, President of the Indian National Congress Party and Chair of the United Progressive Alliance addressed the 14th Commonwealth Foundation Lecture in London on 17th March 2011 and urged the Commonwealth to spearhead the inclusion of women in the global climate change debate.

71. Consistent with our commitment to the Commonwealth Foundation, we have contributed GBP 127,875.00 towards our assessed contribution for the financial year 2013-14.

Commonwealth of Learning

72. The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is an inter-governmental organisation (with headquarters in Vancouver, Canada) created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning/distance education knowledge, resources and technologies. COL is helping developing nations improve access to quality education and training. It is the only official commonwealth agency located outside Britain. Fully operational since 1989, COL is financially supported by Commonwealth governments on a voluntary basis. It responds to Commonwealth needs through in-country and regional programmes and initiatives, as well as free for service consulting for international agencies and national governments.

Through COL, Indian expertise has been utilised in building distance education capacity in other parts of the region and the Commonwealth. Indira Gandhi National Open University, the National Institute of Open Schooling and National Assessment and Accreditation Council are key partners of COL. India is the third largest contributor to the COL budget after UK and Canada. Currently, India's contribution to COL is Rs.50 million. Secretary (Higher Education) is a member of the Board of Governors and the Executive Committee of COL.

73. India is in discussion with COL for possible support to their ongoing Virtual University of Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) project in its second five year cycle (2010-15.) VUSSC, a project run by the COL for 32 small states/island states of the Commonwealth for training of human resources in the use of ICT and programmes in e-Learning formats, has been accorded India's commitment at the highest levels. The Commonwealth had sought India's financial support to the project through a full or partial funding amounting to US\$ 1 million over a five year period (\$200,000 p.a.). However, we conveyed our view that given our proven expertise in e-content and distance learning, we would be happy to offer support to the project 'in kind'. The COL has not responded to this offer.

Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowship Plan (CSFP)

74. Commonwealth had asked for a contribution of UK£ 500,000 from India to the Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) 50th Anniversary Endowment Fund. In response to Commonwealth Secretariat's request, India has agreed to offer contribution to CSFP in kind by way of an additional 50 scholarships in undergraduate studies, 50 scholarships in engineering/post-

graduate/MBA courses and 15 junior fellowships (for a period of 3-12 months) over a period of 5 years starting from 2011-12 2015-16. This scholarship is being administered by ICCR.

Queen's Diamond Jubilee Trust

75. In response to a request for the Secretary General and former UK PM John Major, India announced a contribution of US\$1 million in 2012 to the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Trust comprising a cash contribution of US \$ 200, 000 and an 'in kind' contribution of 50 scholarships for students from Commonwealth countries to study in India (30 at undergraduate and 20 at post-graduate level) for the academic year 2013-14 valued at US\$ 800,000.

Commonwealth Local Government Forum

76. Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) is one of the two Commonwealth associated organizations in the elected category (other is Commonwealth Parliamentary Association). It was founded in 1995 as a focus for action on local democracy in the Commonwealth and was endorsed by Commonwealth Heads of Government at their meeting in New Zealand that year. It works to promote and strengthen democratic local government across the Commonwealth, and to encourage the exchange of best practice through conferences and events.

77. Union Ministries of Panchayati Raj, Rural Development, Urban Development and Urban Employment & Poverty Alleviation, 14 local municipalities and All-India Institute for Local Self Government are at present paid members of CLGF from India.

78. Government of India hosted the meeting of CLGF Board in New Delhi in 2002. Following this meeting, CLGF's Good Practice Scheme was launched in India which is supported by UK DFID. Three states-Gujarat, Kerala and Maharashtra were selected for the programme which provides technical skills exchanges between Indian local government practitioners and their counterparts in the other Commonwealth Countries, particularly UK.

79. Minister of Urban Development, Shri Kamal Nath is on the Board of Governors of CLGF and attended the CLGF meeting in Uganda in 2013. India has agreed to host the 8th Commonwealth Local Government Conference in New Delhi in 2015.

Commonwealth Business Council

80. The Commonwealth Business Council (CBC) was established by the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Edinburgh in October 1997 to encourage greater private sector involvement in the promotion of trade and investment and support private sector development under the broad mandate of “Promoting Shared Prosperity”, the special theme of the Edinburgh Commonwealth Economic Declaration.

81. CBC is the only Commonwealth organization that engages in consensus-building between the private sector and governments on trade and investment. It acts as a bridge for co-operation between business and government, concentrating on efforts to help remove barriers to trade, mobilise investment into Commonwealth countries, foster a good environment for business and investment, promote good practice in corporate governance and corporate citizenship, and facilitate the engagement of the private sector in information communication technology for development (ICT4D) initiatives, especially in least developed countries. It organises the biennial Commonwealth Business Forum on the sidelines of the CHOGM.

India’s present contributions

82. India is the fourth largest contributor to overall Commonwealth budgets after the UK, Canada and Australia. It is the fifth largest contributor to the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC), with an annual contribution of GBP 1 million. India’s ongoing contribution to the Commonwealth is summarised in a table in **Annex I**.

October 2013

India's ongoing contribution to the Commonwealth

S.No	Nature of payment	Amount in £ / US\$
1	India's contribution to Commonwealth Secretariat : 2013-14	£ 658,107/-
2	India's contribution to Commonwealth Foundation : 2013-14	£ 127,875/-
3 (a)	India's contribution to Commonwealth Joint Office in New York : 2013-14	\$ 1,00,000/-
3 (b)	India's contribution to Commonwealth Small States Office in Geneva : 2013-14	\$ 80,000/-
4	India's contribution to Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC) 2013-14 (provided by Ministry of Finance)	£ 1,000,000/-
5	Queen's Diamond Jubilee Trust:	US\$1 million comprising a cash contribution of US \$ 200, 000 and an 'in kind' contribution of 50 one-time scholarships valued at US\$ 800,000. [30 at undergraduate and 20 at post-graduate level starting from the academic year 2013-14.]

6	India's contribution to Phase I of the Commonwealth Partnership Platform Portal (P-3) (in July 2009)	£104,000/-
7	India's contribution to the Commonwealth Youth Programme: 2013-14 <i>(by Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sport)</i>	£ 119,138/-