

2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 'Urbanisation': the need for a co-ordinated Commonwealth response

1. **Advocating 'Urbanisation' as a cross-cutting theme:** The purpose of this paper is to advocate for 'Urbanisation' to be incorporated as a critically important cross-cutting theme for inclusion on the agenda of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) and related forum to be held in London in April 2018.
2. **Relevant to and aligning with the overarching theme of the meeting:** 'Urbanisation' is directly relevant to the Summit's overarching theme of 'Towards a Common future' together with its objectives of creating: a more sustainable future, a fairer future, a more secure future and a more prosperous future.
3. **A recurring and critically important subject:** While 'Urbanisation' has featured prominently in previous CHOGM agendas^{1,2} it is clear that much remains to be done if the opportunities for capturing the social, economic and environmental benefits from the growth of cities are to be realised and risks avoided.

UN Habitat estimates that Cities today occupy only 2% of the total land area yet are responsible for 70% of global GDP, 60% of global energy consumption, 70% of greenhouse gas emissions and 70% of global waste³.

4. **The unique character of the Commonwealth:** While urbanisation is a global phenomenon the diversity of the Commonwealth creates a unique set of challenges and opportunities, eg:
 - **The vulnerability of small island developing states (SIDS):** Many countries in the Commonwealth particularly in Pacific and Caribbean regions are small island developing states which are particularly vulnerable to climate change and other impacts due to their small size, fragile economies, lack of resilience in the face of hazards including sea level rise, cyclones, earthquakes and extreme weather events as evidenced most recently by hurricanes Irma and Maria.
 - **The unprecedented scale of the challenge⁴ in the Commonwealth:** The UN's Department for Economic and Social Affairs predicts that the world's urban population will increase by 2.5 billion by 2050 with nearly 90% of that increase concentrated in Asia and Africa, and with much of that growth happening in Commonwealth Countries. India alone is predicted to add 404 million dwellers and Nigeria 212 million over this period, ie 18 million new urban dwellers per annum or 1.5 million per month in these two countries alone.
 - **High rates of urbanisation are anticipated in some of the Commonwealth's most fragile states (ie vulnerability to conflict or collapse):** 16 Commonwealth countries are urbanising at rates of more than 3% per annum⁵, eg: Malawi (5.2%), Uganda (4.4%), Tanzania (4.2%), Rwanda (4.2%), Mozambique (4.1%), Solomon Islands (4.1%), Vanuatu (4.1%), Kenya (4%), Nigeria (3.8%), Bangladesh, (3.5%), Cameroon (3.5%), Ghana (3.5%), Lesotho (3.5%), Belize (3.1%), Malaysia (3%) and Pakistan (3%). For comparison purposes, the UK is urbanising at a rate of 0.5% per annum.

Eight Commonwealth countries have a Fragility Index⁶ between 90 and 100 (ie between 'warning' and 'alert'), ie: Nigeria (103.5), Pakistan (101.7), Kenya (98.3), Cameroon (97.8), Uganda (97.7), Rwanda (91.3), Sierra Leone (91) and Bangladesh (90.7). Seven of these countries are rapidly urbanising.

5. CHOGM 2018 provides an opportunity to address these challenges:

- **An opportunity to use urbanisation to promote prosperity in some of the Commonwealth's poorest countries:** 13 of the 16 Commonwealth countries which are urbanising most rapidly are classified as either 'Low' or 'Low-middle' income countries by the World Bank⁷. Several of the countries with the highest rates of urbanisation are home to Commonwealth cities which score poorly on the UN's City Prosperity Index(CPI)⁸,

¹ <http://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/commonwealth-peoples-forum-2013-outcome-document>

² <http://cpf.commonwealthfoundation.com/sessions/planning-for-resilient-urbanisation/>

³ <http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/>

⁴ <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/Publications/Files/WUP2014-Report.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2212.html>

⁶ <https://germanwatch.org/en/download/16411.pdf>

⁷ http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.PP.CD?year_high_desc=true

⁸ <http://cpi.unhabitat.org/>

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namely Accra (40/100), Cape Town (42/100), Johannesburg (42/100) Lagos (38/100), Lusaka (38/100), Nairobi (55/100) and Dhaka (0/100). For comparison purposes London scores 64/100.

- **A need to improve the business environment in country's experiencing rapid urbanisation:** 20 Commonwealth countries score below 50 on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index⁹, 13 score below 33 and 4 score 25, namely: Bangladesh, Kenya, Papua New Guinea and Uganda. Three of these countries are rapidly urbanising.
- **An opportunity to use urbanisation to improve the quality of life for some of the poorest people in the Commonwealth:** The five Commonwealth countries with the lowest Human Development Index (HDI)¹⁰ are Sierra Leone (0.413), Mozambique (0.416), Malawi (0.445), Uganda (0.483) and Rwanda (0.483), all of which are in Africa. Rwanda and Mozambique are also rapidly urbanising and are classified as Low or Low-middle income.
- **An opportunity to engage young people in the creation of their future cities:** The Commonwealth's 52-member countries have a combined population of more than 2 billion, of which more than 60% are under 30 years of age most of whom live in cities. The Commonwealth sees young people aged 15-29 as assets to a country's development who should be empowered to realise their potential. Young people have a proven capability to lead change, and are a vital and valuable investment for the future.
- **A need to strengthen the resilience of cities, especially in those parts of the Commonwealth which are most vulnerable to climate change impacts:** High rates of urbanisation are anticipated in parts of the Commonwealth which are most vulnerable to climate change impacts. The five Commonwealth countries with the most vulnerable Climate Risk Indexes (CRI)¹¹ are: Bangladesh (25), Pakistan (30.5), India (37.5), Grenada (40.33) and Dominica (42). The five Commonwealth countries with the biggest financial losses attributable to Climate Risk are: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Australia and the United Kingdom. Two of these countries are rapidly urbanising.

6. Working together towards a common future:

Only by working collaboratively and in partnership will we be able to manage the challenges and opportunities created by the growth of cities. CHOGM 2018 provides an exceptionally powerful and timely opportunity to bring together a diverse range of stakeholders from government and civil society to focus on the process of urbanisation and the role of cities to help create a more sustainable future, a fairer future, a more secure future and a more prosperous future.

The Commonwealth Association of Architects and the Commonwealth Association of Planners are keen to work with other Commonwealth Organisations to convene around the topic of 'Urbanisation' and to engage with the Peoples Forum, the Business Forum, the Women's Forum and the Youth Forum. We would seek to use the forums to build coalitions around a range of topics including: Rapid Urbanisation, Resilience and Climate Change, Governance and Inclusion (especially in terms of gender and youth), and Local Economic Development helping to ensure our collective ability to deliver the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's)¹².

We are also keen to ensure that the importance of 'Urbanisation' is included in the final communiqué and for Heads of Government to recognise the need for appropriate Urban Policy at national and local levels, focused (but not exclusively) on cities and skills/capacity development consistent with our commitments to the SDG's and working within the framework of the New Urban Agenda¹³.

Tomorrow's cities are being planned today and only by addressing these issues now will we be able to realise the potential of urbanisation to create prosperity, stability and a truly sustainable future.

Submitted jointly by the Commonwealth Association of Architects, the Commonwealth Association of Planners and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum

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⁹ https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016#table

¹⁰ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data>

¹¹ <https://germanwatch.org/en/download/16411.pdf>

¹² <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

¹³ <http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/>