CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
Fifth session
Geneva, 1-12 October 2001

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF COMMONWEALTH REPRESENTATIVES AT
THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE
UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION
BONN, 14 DECEMBER 2000

Note by the secretariat

Attached herewith, at the request of the Commonwealth Secretariat, is the report on the above-mentioned subject, which is reproduced in the language in which it was received by the Convention secretariat.
COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT

Report of the Meeting of Commonwealth Representatives at the Fourth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification,
Bonn, 14th December 2000

Objectives

• To exchange ideas and experiences on the implementation of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) at the regional and national levels in Commonwealth countries.

• To examine the role that the Commonwealth can play in building consensus and assisting countries to better implement the UNCCD.

Background

The meeting was chaired by Mr Philbert Brown the UNCCD focal point for Jamaica and a Vice President of the Bureau for the 4th Conference of Parties to the Convention. It was attended by representatives from 21 countries and the Global Environment Facility. (A list of participants is provided in Annex 1).

S. Malomo gave a presentation describing Commonwealth Secretariat involvement in the Convention to Combat Desertification to date which is largely participating as observers in the Conference of Parties but more actively in the work of the Committee on Science and Technology (a subsidiary body of the Conference of Parties).

The development of the new mission statement of the Commonwealth Secretariat which, focuses inter alia on the Secretariat serving 'as a platform for global consensus building and a source of practical help for sustainable development’, it is important that delegates be aware of the direction and the wind of change in the Secretariat’s work and how their countries can benefit.

The development of Commonwealth Secretariat work areas by the internal task force on environment provides a new opportunity to build on the partnership, with the UNCCD Secretariat and other bilateral and multilateral donors to assist member states on the issues related to the Convention.

Two of the focal areas developed by the Environmental Task force are pertinent to the work of the CCD. These are:

Focal area 1. Building the capacity of Commonwealth developing member governments to participate more effectively in the negotiation of international agreements on sustainable development.

Focal area 2. Building the capacity of Commonwealth developing member governments to implement the international agreements on sustainable development to which they are parties.
Discussion

The discussion following the presentation by delegates was on the following issues:

- Commonwealth small states feel marginalised in the negotiations as well as in the planning and implementation of the work of the Convention?
- What can the Commonwealth Secretariat do to help small states implement the Convention, especially in the development of National Action Plans (NAPS)?
- What types of capacity building does the Commonwealth Secretariat plan to carry out, at what level and which area of the work of the convention?
- Can the Commonwealth Secretariat support the development of national action plans for small states?
- Since the UN Convention to Combat Desertification focuses largely on poverty, what links exist between the Commonwealth Secretariat responses to the Convention and other wider poverty issues?
- How can the Commonwealth Secretariat help build capacities with local communities and non-governmental organisations to implement the NAPS?

Conclusion

It was agreed that the meeting served a useful purpose towards consensus building among Commonwealth countries and that further efforts be made to organise such meetings in the wings of the Conference of Parties.

The primary need of countries is in the area of capacity building in the development of national action plans and the implementation of the thematic areas of those that have been developed.

The Commonwealth Secretariat should explore the possibility of seeking funding for the development of National Action Plans (especially with respect to small states) and their implementation through partnership with donors and more-endowed states of the Commonwealth.
### List of participants

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