

**International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)
Commonwealth Trade Union Group (CTUG)**

**CTUG submission to the 2007 Commonwealth Heads
of Government Meeting (CHOGM)
(Kampala, 23-25 November 2007):**

**“TRANSFORMING THE COMMONWEALTH TO ACHIEVE
DECENT WORK”**

Introduction: Building Commonwealth Institutions

1. The Commonwealth Trade Union Group (CTUG) represents over 30 million workers in 51 of the 53 Commonwealth countries. We submit this statement to the 2007 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in order to defend and advance the interests of all workers and people in the Commonwealth. The CTUG calls on Commonwealth Leaders to follow the recommendations herein and to adopt the requisite decisions at their Kampala summit in November 2007.
2. The CTUG supports strongly the successful development of intergovernmental cooperation through the Commonwealth in order to attain democracy, human rights and decent work in all its countries. We call on Commonwealth leaders to agree that the Commonwealth will play a greater role in achieving socially equitable and sustainable development. The CTUG believes strongly in the institutions of the Commonwealth and we call on Commonwealth leaders to devote enhanced resources to, and increase the political priority given to the work of those institutions.

Strengthening Democracy through Tripartite Consultation

3. Free, independent and representative trade unions give working people a chance to have a say in their own futures. Consultation of trade unions and of representative employers' organisations must be increased and made more effective. **The CTUG calls for the Heads of Government to mandate the Commonwealth secretariat to monitor progress towards the universal ratification by all Commonwealth countries of ILO Convention 144, Tripartite Consultation by the time of the CHOGM in 2009; and to take the decision that all Commonwealth countries will consult their tripartite constituents formally in the process of preparation of Commonwealth meetings.**
4. Equivalent structures to build tripartism at the Commonwealth level are needed in a process of reinforcing the priorities given to decent work by Commonwealth governments. It is insufficient that the Commonwealth should focus its processes of intergovernmental cooperation on annual meetings of Finance Ministers and regular meetings of Education Ministers as well as Sports Ministers. **The CHOGM should decide that Commonwealth Labour Ministers will hold an Annual Forum, to be organised on a tripartite basis.**

Human and Trade Union Rights

5. Human rights are under severe attack in an unacceptably large number of Commonwealth countries. Furthermore, the Commonwealth must maintain its pressure upon its former member country Zimbabwe, where violations of human rights are worsening daily. The CHOGM must decide upon effective measures to promote reform and change in Commonwealth member countries that violate human rights and undermine democracy.
6. Among the most essential human rights are the rights of workers. All members of the ILO should have ratified the eight fundamental Conventions of the ILO¹, yet such is far from the case in a range of Commonwealth countries. The CTUG will itself publish a biennial report on violations of trade union rights in the Commonwealth, ahead of each CHOGM. **The CTUG calls on Heads of Government to establish a target for all Commonwealth governments to ratify all eight core labour standards within the next six years, to undertake biennial reviews of progress towards that objective and to publish the results of their reviews.**

Decent work and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

7. Some progress has been achieved towards meeting the MDGs established by the United Nations, but it is far from enough. The key to the future is to invest in people – in their access to justice, to labour protection, to education, to health care, and to clean water. **The CTUG calls on Heads of Government to publish a biennial stock-taking of progress towards attaining the MDGs for each developing country in the Commonwealth.**
8. Decent work has been recognised by the United Nations as central to poverty alleviation and should be placed at the core of social and economic policy. Yet currently, decent work and job security are increasingly threatened in many Commonwealth countries. Many workers once employed in formal jobs have been pushed into informal and unprotected work. To counteract these trends, governments must bring work within a legal framework where workers' rights can be enforced, with enhanced priority to ensuring labour inspectorates are effective. **The CHOGM should establish a fund for capacity enhancement activities by trade unions, covering inter alia workers in informal work and export processing zones and linked to ILO assistance and technological cooperation.**
9. Discrimination - whether involving gender, race, caste, age, or of whatever form – is a blight affecting all Commonwealth countries. Achieving gender equality depends on equal rights of inheritance, land ownership, workers' rights, property rights, and access to banks and financial institutions. It requires governments to tackle the spread of the unprotected economy where a great majority of women, children, young people and racial minorities continue to be exploited. The CTUG calls on Commonwealth governments to promote decent work policies and targets that can make a difference in the fight against discrimination, and to monitor progress regularly at Commonwealth level.

¹ Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining; the elimination of forced or compulsory labour and child labour; equal remuneration, and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

10. In too many countries, corruption and rising inequalities are undermining the development process and preventing the benefits of growth from reaching the most needy. Transparency and accountability are necessary to combat corruption, and trade unions can play a vital role in contributing to this effort. The CHOGM should call for adherence to the guidelines on corruption of the UN and OECD.
11. Redistributive taxation is required to provide the resources for vital public services - general education, community and family health, and basic utilities, including water. The CTUG calls on the Heads of Government to endorse the need for an effective public sector in attaining development.
12. Migration is taking place in growing numbers worldwide, including within the Commonwealth, but rarely in a way that provides the best results for the workers and developing countries concerned. The brain drain is depriving too many developing countries of vitally needed human resources, while migrant workers too often face discrimination and xenophobia in their countries of destination. Commonwealth leaders should promote an international framework providing structured arrangements for migration, including measures to guarantee equal rights for migrant workers, encourage their full integration, prevent exploitation by employers and protect them against discrimination; and for receiving countries to help the countries of origin to train more skilled people through providing resources for increased access to education.

Trade, Multinationals and Development

13. In the Doha Round of the WTO, it is vital that dangers to employment be fully anticipated and that adequate policy space be preserved for attaining domestic development priorities. A full impact assessment of the employment repercussions and industrial policy implications of current proposals in the area of Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA) is particularly required. **Commonwealth Leaders should establish an observatory to analyse the effects of the WTO on Commonwealth countries and develop a strategy to mitigate negative economic and employment impacts.**
14. In response to the employment consequences of off-shoring and out-sourcing, more effective international rules to shape globalisation are needed. Many developing countries are competing intensely for export markets and investment and the problems this is creating, already highly evident in the textiles sector, stand to be generalised as competition increases. This would result in a further proliferation of labour rights abuses in export processing zones and repression of workers' rights in China. It shows the need for governments to guarantee core workers' rights through an effective floor to support labour standards. The CHOGM should agree that the WTO undertake discussions on how to enable trade to result in sustainable social and economic progress, and not the undermining of decent work; and support international instruments that provide clear guidance for acceptable corporate social practices, namely the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises and the ILO Tripartite Declaration on Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy.
15. The United Nations target for official development assistance of 0.7% of GNP must be restated as achievable by all industrialised countries. ODA needs to be oriented towards projects and aid recipients that promote decent work, and complemented by

action to reduce the debt burden on developing countries. **The CTUG calls on Heads of Government to assert the commitment of all industrialised countries in the Commonwealth to meet the UN aid target, to review biennially their progress towards that end and to publish the results of their review.**

Peace, Disaster Relief and the Fight against HIV/AIDS

16. Serious tensions and threats of war are a commonplace on too many Commonwealth borders. The Commonwealth must take a much higher profile, more effective role in building and achieving peace between Commonwealth members.
17. The small island developing countries of the Commonwealth face particular problems from the impact of climate change on their shores, exacerbating the already grave natural disasters in the form of hurricanes and tropical storms. **The CHOGM should set up a high-level commission to examine the challenges of climate change (in priority the dangers faced by small island developing countries), in order to create structures that can deliver rapid solidarity assistance in the event of natural catastrophes and assist countries to deal with the challenges of employment transition to a more sustainable economy.**
18. HIV/AIDS continues to menace the future of all Commonwealth countries. **The CTUG calls on Heads of Government to take a decision that all Commonwealth countries will adopt and follow the ILO Code of Conduct on HIV/AIDS by 2013.**
