



CTUG SUBMISSION TO CHOGM SAMOA 2024

The Commonwealth Trade Union Group, originally founded in 1979, and now with over 70 million members in most Commonwealth countries, represents working people across a third of the world.

We welcome the role of Samoa in hosting the first CHOGM in a Pacific island state, and the role of our Samoan affiliate in the preparations for CHOGM. We endorse the Samoan concept of the Aiga, or community, as the founding feature of the Commonwealth.

Above all, the Commonwealth of the future needs to act more coherently to defend the interests of its people and civil society more generally, especially in multilateral forums where Commonwealth governments constitute two of the G7, five of the G20, 55 of the International Labour Organisation's 187 constituents and 56 of the UN's 193 member states. The Commonwealth Charter should be a more influential document, and Commonwealth governments should be held accountable to the commitments freely entered into as well as all other international human rights regulations.

Resilient societies

We believe that resilience is key to sustainable societies - as the global financial crisis and the COVID19 pandemic have shown, those countries with the greatest resilience have been able to weather storms more effectively, with less harm to their peoples and communities.

We call upon the Commonwealth to promote gender equality and women's empowerment including:

1. Addressing gender-based violence by committing to universal Commonwealth ratification of ILO Convention 190 on violence and harassment at work.
2. Encouraging investment in the care economy to provide decent work for women and greater participation in the labour market.
3. Supporting moves towards equal pay for work of equal value.

We call upon the Commonwealth to focus on human capital development and learning for all by:

4. Creating more quality apprenticeships with decent pay for young and old alike as part of a major expansion of lifelong learning.
5. Encouraging universal primary and secondary education (especially for girls).
6. Committing to raise domestic spending on public education to 4-6% of GDP.

We call upon the Commonwealth to support moves towards tax justice, such as:

7. Eliminating tax havens, supporting the Bridgetown Initiative, and backing minimum corporate tax rates.

We call upon the Commonwealth to promote health for all, including:

8. Promoting Commonwealth ratification and implementation of ILO Conventions 155 and 187, newly recognised as fundamental principles and rights at work, as major contributors to tackling mental health and non-communicable diseases, as well as workplace injuries and deaths.
9. Establishing tripartite agreements on the mobility of health and care workers based on properly funded health worker budgets.

We call upon the Commonwealth to promote sport for development and peace, including:

10. Reaffirming support for the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Games Federation's engagement with the Centre for Sport and Human Rights.

Resilient democratic institutions

Recognising the rising tide of populism, right wing divisiveness and illiberal action even by democratic governments in the Commonwealth, we call upon the Commonwealth:

11. To promote democracy, not only regular free and fair elections to local and national government, but recognising the vital importance of civil society as the third pillar of the Commonwealth, and the need for protection for freedoms of association, assembly and speech, including the right to strike.
12. The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group must take more seriously its role to promote the Charter of the Commonwealth, and must be open to references from civil society as well as governments.

We note in particular that democratic rights are being breached in eSwatini and India and must be safeguarded in countries like Gabon before its partial suspension is lifted, and in Zimbabwe before it is readmitted to the Commonwealth.

We welcome the increasing calls for human rights for disabled people and support the adoption of a Commonwealth code of conduct for their participation. But we also call for an

inclusive recognition of the rights of LGBTQI+ communities, and the need to defend the rights of trade unions, journalists and others to freedom of assembly, association and expression, and the right to strike.

In particular, we call upon the Commonwealth to:

13. Convene annual meetings of Commonwealth Labour and Employment Ministers, along the lines of the G7 and G20 LEMMs, with the involvement of the social partners, in the margins of the annual ILO Conference to discuss joint action on employment matters.

A resilient environment

We recognise the climate crisis as an existential threat to humanity, and especially to those small island developing states in the Pacific, Caribbean and elsewhere. Climate change is destroying jobs and livelihoods around the world, increasing health and safety risks especially but not exclusively to outdoor workers, and is the cause of increasing vulnerability among communities as well as forcing migration. There are no jobs on a dead planet, and trade unions stand for a just transition to a low and no carbon economy as a key element of climate justice.

We call on the Commonwealth and governments to:

14. Support measures to involve workers and their unions as well as employers in planning for a Just Transition.
15. Co-ordinate efforts in international fora to support loss and damage measures including adequate climate financing.

Resilient economies

Without co-ordinated effort at international level, developing countries which make up the majority of the Commonwealth's population will not be able to provide justice for their peoples. Boosting trade between Commonwealth countries can play a part, but it must be fair and just trade, respecting the rights of working people.

We call on the Commonwealth and its governments to:

16. Support measures to ensure corporate due diligence in global value chains and trade agreements.
17. Negotiate arrangements with trade unions and employers to ensure that labour migration does not create a brain drain, and ensures decent work for migrants while not undermining the living standards in destination countries.
18. Ensure that trade unions and employers can collectively bargain to produce decent, fair wages, backed up by government action to ensure minimum living wages for all.
19. Promote universal social insurance, including by working together in the UN and ILO.
20. Address indebtedness and ensure low-risk public financing for public goods such as health, care, education and social insurance.