

**Third Commonwealth Ministers Forum on Public Sector Development held in
Malta on 20 – 21 October, 2010**

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2. Over 20 Ministers and 100 senior officers including heads of Civil Service attended the forum from 40 Countries. I was accompanied at the Forum by the Senior Chief Executive of my ministry who also attended the CAPAM Conference.

3. On 20 October, regional consultations were held where each of the three regions deliberated on their expectations from the Forum. The African Group which I attended made the following main proposals:

(a) Issues should be debated as one, developing and developed countries together.

(b) Decisions of the Forum should reach the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) through an appropriate mechanism.

(c) There should be follow up on the issues raised in the thematic areas.

(d) To be effective the regional caucus should have a structure and agenda.

(e) The readiness of our public service to respond to global challenges of climate change and the economic downturn.

(f) Agenda for next biennial Conference (CAPAM).

4. In my intervention at the caucus, I made the points at (a), (b) and (e) above and made the proposals for addressing these issues at the Forum.

5. The official opening ceremony held on 21 October was presided over by the Deputy Secretary General of the Commonwealth, Mr. Ransford Smith.

6. The Secretary General of the Commonwealth, Mr. Kamlesh Sharma made a video recorded statement to the forum. He focused on good governance as one of the Commonwealth many strengths and referred to it as the oil and the machinery of democracy. He viewed the value system of progressive public institutions as service and not bureaucracy. He said that leaders must choose the right standards for the right reasons. They cannot afford to raise standards of effectiveness and efficiency on the things that can be measured easily or where they know performance is strong. Leaders need to look at the public sector' service value chain' and understand the connection between employee commitment, quality public services, client satisfaction, and citizen confidence in Government.

7. In his inaugural statement the Prime Minister of Malta, Hon Lawrence Gonzi made the following points:

(a) The concepts and key fundamental values advocated strongly by the Commonwealth such as democratic governance and public sector development take on even greater proportions in facing the current global challenges.

- (b) We need to re-appraise and strengthen our governance structures whilst reforming and empowering our public sector to address and respond effectively to these changing scenarios.
- (c) Public administration must be carried out for the benefit and well-being of the people. The task of any modern public administration is to deliver a service focused on the needs of citizens.
- (d) This effort to improve public services has to also encompass business services. Governments, especially after the economic crisis, should continue supporting and pushing forward government agencies towards increased efficiency enhancing the business climate such that economic well being may flourish and permeate throughout all strata of society, while maintaining regulation.
- (e) The importance of harnessing the latest information and communication technologies. Technology has the potential of transforming previous challenges of insularity into economic opportunities of connectivity for many small state members of the Commonwealth.
- (f) Citizen engagement is seen as an appropriate and necessary part of policy implementation in the democratic system.
- (g) A fundamental principle of public sector development and good governance is accountability. Governments need to continue investing in implementing safeguards against any abuse of public powers.
- (h) Training at all levels is a pre-requisite for an efficient and effective public service.
- (i) As a key enabler of national sustainable development, the public sector underpins economic, social and environmental well-being each of these being

achieved as a whole at not at the expense of one or the other. Joined-up Government is a pivot to ensure a mentality of consolidation rather than the much maligned silo mentality.

8. The Commonwealth Secretariat then reported on progress on the 2009 Ministers Forum priorities for action on the following:

- Leveraging strategic relations.
- Building effective national networks.
- Supporting dynamic leadership.
- Studies on senior management performance
- Contracting in the Caribbean and Africa available on line, and continue to monitor development.

9. Considerable achievements have been made and the Secretariat was requested to pursue further on these, while focusing on this year's theme of good governance and innovation in public policy development.

10. The two thematic on the main agenda were:

(1) Valuing Good Governance in the Commonwealth; and

(2) Innovating Public Policy Development at the Center.

11. Advisers of the Commonwealth Secretariat made presentations on these subjects. In these presentations most of the points and issues raised by the Secretary

General and the Prime Minister of Malta were brought to the center of discussion. There was consensus on the importance of integrating good governance and innovation in public service to ensure prompt, efficient and effective delivery with optimal use of resources. The culture of good governance should be inculcated in each and every public service officer. Much emphasis was put on training and the Commonwealth Secretariat was called upon to strengthen its action towards facilitation in empowering the public sector institutions and officers in the Commonwealth.

12. In my statement, I emphasised the importance of putting into practice the outcome of the forum and bringing the main thrust to the CHOGM in order to be able to draw on impetus from the highest level and thereby facilitate implementation. I stressed on the specific situations of small island developing states which were adversely affected not only by the global economic downturn, but also by climate change and sea level rise. These issues demanded innovative policy orientation which needed to be integrated in public sector strategy. The Public Sector should be at the forefront by providing the necessary framework and guidance to the private sector and civil society as a whole to enable production of national wealth in a sustainable manner. I further gave the example of Mauritius where “Maurice Ile Durable” is led and steered by the Prime Minister and where a Minister has been given the specific portfolio of Environment and Sustainable Development. That was to ensure that the integration of the three dimension of sustainable development.

13. In the fringe of the Forum, my delegation met with the delegation of Singapore and exchanged notes on public sector policy in the face of the economic situation, and

how they managed to remain resilient. I enquired about the availability of Singapore to assist my Ministry in the setting up of the Civil Service College with the Dean and Chief Executive Officer of the Civil Service College, Singapore. I am happy to note that they were quite willing to assist.

14. The two delegations also agreed to network in order to draw from each other's experience. In this respect my Ministry is already consulting with Singapore on the mode of recruitment and the scheme of service in the Civil Service.

15. My delegation held discussion with Mr. Omar Mowlana, Adviser, Human Resource Management, and Commonwealth Secretariat who has been working over more than a year on the setting up of the Civil Service College in Mauritius. He informed us that funds were now again available for the study and that in the following weeks he was going to meet with those concerned in Singapore in order to contract them for the assignment. We would thus be able to move quickly in this project.