

Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development

The *1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development* was developed in response to a request by ministers responsible for women's affairs at their July 1993 meeting in Cyprus.

This request was supported by Commonwealth countries at the Heads of Government meeting in October 1993, also in Cyprus. The action plan is consistent with commitments made in the 1991 Harare declaration to uphold the "fundamental political values of the Commonwealth" — democracy, the rule of law, just and honest government and human rights. Ministers pledged that they would work with renewed vigour for "equality for women, so that they may exercise their full and equal rights." In their 1993 communiqué, Heads of Government reaffirmed that "women's rights were an integral and indivisible part of human rights."

Ministers also believed that the Commonwealth was in a strong position to provide a model for international collaboration for achieving gender equality because of its background of mutual co-operation and support, based on the equal participation of its members, its shared legal and administrative structures, and its common language.

The plan of action was presented as a special Commonwealth contribution to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing by ministers responsible for women's affairs on September 3, 1995. Prior to that, endorsement of the plan of action, in principle, was sought at the Pan-Commonwealth Meeting of Women's Bureaux in Malta in June 1995.

In Auckland, leaders will be asked to endorse the *1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development*, which outlines a number of key strategies to achieve equality for women.

The plan of action calls for:

- the integration and mainstreaming of gender issues into all policies and programs of Commonwealth countries;
- the establishment and strengthening of national machineries of government to promote women's issues;
- Commonwealth co-operation in the establishment of "gender management systems," such as training strategies, data bases and national legislation;
- programs targeted specifically at women in critical areas such as human rights, the elimination of violence, participation in decision making, management of technology and the elimination of absolute poverty;
- "equal and equitable outcomes" of development.