

Suggested interventions for the Hon'ble Foreign Minister at the annual Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting (CFAMM) to be held at the United Nations Headquarters, New York on Thursday, 22 September 2011 from 15:00 – 17:30 hours

[For kind information: Despite announcement, no annotated agenda has been circulated as of 12 September 2011. Not all documents have been circulated as yet. Due to paucity of time, large number of delegations and lengthy agenda, there may not be much scope for interventions except on 'Elements Paper'.]

Agenda item 2: Current Commonwealth Preoccupations

(a) Democracy and Good Offices activities:

[Mr. Chairman, my sincere thanks to you for very ably leading the Foreign Affairs Ministers Meetings of the Commonwealth since the 2009 CHOGM in Trinidad and Tobago. Session. We are deeply appreciative of the diligent efforts exerted by you and the Secretary General in substantive work in the lead up to the CHOGM 2011. We believe that today's meeting will serve as an important preview of the forthcoming Summit and will be extremely useful in our preparation for the grand finale.]

Mr. Chairman, upholding democracy and good governance are central to the values of the Commonwealth. They are also the basis for sustainable peace and stability. It is our consistent position that a positive engagement for supporting development of democratic and good governance institutions, rather than punitive or violent approach, is the best way to protect democracy, peace and stability. The 'good offices' activities of the Secretariat are extremely important in advancing these constructive commitments of the Commonwealth. We are happy to note that 'good offices' initiatives of the Commonwealth [Cameroon, Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Swaziland, Maldives, Guyana, Fiji and Tonga] are on across the Commonwealth. Many of them have resulted in success stories.

(b) Ministerial Committee on Belize:

Mr. Chairman, as a fellow member of the Commonwealth, Bangladesh extends sincere support for the territorial integrity and security of Belize vis-à-vis the claims of Guatemala. We view the intention of the two countries to refer the matter to the International Court of Justice as a positive development towards peaceful settlement of the conflict. However, we hope that the two countries would find a way to resolve the issue of simultaneous referendum in both the countries, which now stands in the way of the referral. We are convinced that the Commonwealth Ministerial Committee on Belize need to remain seized of the matter.

(c) Ministerial Committee on Guyana:

Mr. Chairman, as a member of the Ministerial Committee on Guyana, Bangladesh lends full support for the maintenance of Guyana's territorial integrity and sovereignty. We value the use of sustained discussions for resolving conflicts and hope that the dispute between the neighbours, Guyana and Venezuela, could be satisfactorily resolved through dialogue and confidence building measures. We believe that the Commonwealth Ministerial Committee on Guyana needs to continue its work on finding an appropriate approach for solution to this historic dispute. [In this context, I would like to mention that, in quest of a peaceful and mutually acceptable solution to the issue of overlapping claims of maritime boundary with her neighbours Myanmar and India, Bangladesh has decided to refer the case to International Tribunal for Law of the Sea and Arbitration Tribunal for the two countries respectively.]

Agenda item 3: CHOGM 2011

(a) Update on CHOGM 2011 Preparations - briefing by Australian Foreign Minister

Mr. Chairman, let thank the Australian Foreign Minister for an exhaustive briefing on the preparations for the Summit. My Prime Minister and I look forward to participating in the CHOGM 2011 in Perth in October 2011. The theme for the forthcoming CHOGM 2011 *Building National Resilience, Building Global Resilience* has been very pertinent in view of the crises that the world is witnessing today in terms of political upheaval, financial melt-down and natural disasters in an environment of climate change, and insecurity of food and energy. We hope that CHOGM 2011 will be successful in contributing to building resilience with effective response to the present-day challenges faced by the world, particularly the developing states. We also hope that the Summit will make important decisions in reforming the institutions of the Commonwealth so that it remains relevant in the contemporary world.

(b) Review of Role of CMAG – briefing by Chair of CMAG & Foreign Minister of Ghana (document available)

Mr. Chairman, as a member of the CMAG, Bangladesh would like to see the CMAG transform from a reactive and punitive body to one which is keen on steady and positive engagement. I wish to express my deep appreciation for the as well as the Secretary General (as convener) over the last two years under the chairmanship of Foreign Minister of Ghana in finalizing the Report to the Heads of Government on *Strengthening the Role of CMAG*. We hope that the Report would be adopted by the Heads of Government by consensus.

(c) Eminent Persons Group (EPG) – briefing by a member of the EPG (document available)

Mr. Chairman, we deeply appreciate the diligent and quality work of the Eminent Persons Group in producing an exhaustive report *A Commonwealth of the People – Time for Urgent Reform*. We have deep regard for the Chair of EPG, former Prime Minister of Malaysia Tun Abdullah Badawi and all members who are very distinguished personalities having made outstanding contributions to the cause of justice, human rights, democracy and peace. The report makes a number of valuable observations and recommendations, notably creation of the position of a *Commonwealth Commissioner for Democracy, Rule of Law and Human Rights*; and establishment of a *Charter of the Commonwealth*. Bangladesh will carefully examine all recommendations. We believe that the recommendations made by the EPG will lead to meaningful reform of the Commonwealth.

(d) Civil Society Statement to CHOGM – briefing by Commonwealth Foundation

Mr. Chairman, it has been extremely helpful to have listened to the briefing on Civil Society Statement, which would form the basis of the session of Commonwealth People's Forum (CPF) to be held in Perth prior to the CHOGM 2011. I thank the Secretary General to make room for this briefing. Unlike many other international organizations, the Commonwealth is markedly oriented to the civil society. The Civil Society Statement reminds us that the civil society organizations are not accessories but integral part of the fabric of the Commonwealth. Indeed, the theme of the forthcoming CPF, *Driving Change for a Dynamic Commonwealth* resonates with the current Commonwealth bid for reform and renewal. I am glad to learn that the Civil Society Statement is not just a statement prepared on the desk of an official but is a result of extensive meetings among real people at the regional level. This is the pulse of people that we the government representatives need to feel.

(e) CHOGM Communiqué – discussion of the ‘Elements Paper’
(document available)

Mr. Chairman, we thank the Secretariat for preparing the ‘Elements Paper’ which would be the basis of the CHOGM Communiqué. We fully understand and concur with the idea that the CHOGM Communiqué needs to be shorter and focused to be able to make a good impact. However, it is also important that the list be an exhaustive one which addresses the concerns of member states and which reflects the expectations of the member states from the Commonwealth. We learn that, as per proposal from the member states at the Senior Officials Meeting held in London on 12 September 2011, three new elements have been included in the draft ‘Elements Paper’. They are terrorism, piracy and migration & development. We views that these are pertinent issues which deserve attention of the Commonwealth. We generally support inclusion of these new ‘elements’

I should like to mention that it was Bangladesh and Jamaica which proposed the inclusion of ‘migration and development’ in the provisional agenda of CHOGM and ‘Elements Paper’ of the Communiqué. Many other delegations (Antigua, Barbados, Guyana, Vanuatu, Cyprus, Sri Lanka, Tonga, and Trinidad and Tobago) were supportive of this inclusion.

It is superfluous to explain the important link between international migration and development. There have been resolutions on international migration and development at the United Nations General Assembly since 1994. Apart from UNGA High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development held in 2006, there have been many forums and meetings on the issue of migration and development at international and regional level. International migration is assuming an increasing role in the economic development of the sending and receiving countries. Issues such as remittances, return migration, trade/FDI by migrants, brain drain, institutional/technological change effected by migrants, effect of emigration on poverty, inequality & human capital formation, etc represent some of the challenges and opportunities arising from migration. International community needs to deal with the challenges and opportunities that migration presents to countries of origin, transit and destination.

Migration is an important phenomenon for the Commonwealth countries. They have a long history of, and experience in, migration. The Commonwealth countries have similar legal structure & cultural ethos, and institutional relations. We share the lofty Commonwealth values of good governance, rule of law and human rights. Besides, Commonwealth is a people’s organization. It is, therefore, only natural that Commonwealth countries should cooperate towards making the process of migration more humane and development-friendly. It may be true that the Commonwealth may not have yet been heavily involved in this area of work. However, the issue is of so pressing importance to many of the member states – be it populous countries or small sland countries – the Commonwealth needs to have a deeper engagement in this area.

I wish to informally bring to your kind notice that the final report of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) urges ‘that the Secretary-General should keep the issue (of migration and development) on the Commonwealth agenda at both the intergovernmental and civil society levels.’ The recommendation R24 in the report says that ‘Commonwealth countries should collectively monitor the ramifications of migration and development in the international community, and the Secretariat should foster partnerships with organisations such as The Ramphal Centre to undertake studies that would inform collective Commonwealth decision-making.’ I would like to further mention that the Vision Statement and Recommendations of the Ramphal Commission contain the main principles: better management capacity, development-friendly migration strategy, contribution to international cooperation, help to diaspora in contribution to origin countries, addressing xenophobia & discrimination, etc. The

Vision Statement and Recommendations could serve as a useful starting point for discussion of the issue of migration and development within the Commonwealth

I hope that inclusion of this element will result in fruitful paragraphs on the issue in the CHOGM Communiqué. If necessary, Bangladesh will be happy to work with other delegations and Secretariat in London to prepare one or two appropriate paragraphs with regard to this element in the initial draft of the CHOGM Communiqué.

Agenda item 4: Other Commonwealth and Global Matters

(a) Small states:

Mr. Chairman, we know that 32 of the 54 member states of the Commonwealth are small states. The Commonwealth has an abiding commitment to the development pursuits of the small states. The many of the challenges of the small states are shared by the least developed countries as well, such as climate change, vulnerability to natural disasters & external shocks, etc. The challenges of the small states indeed have global implication. I am happy to note that, apart from the fact that the issue of the small states has frequently been discussed by the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting, the Commonwealth has nowadays come to have a more sustained engagement with the issue. The holding of the first Small States Biennial Conference at the Commonwealth Secretariat in July 2010 (at the request of the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting held in Cyprus in 2009) is an important step in the right direction. In this context, I wish to thank the Australian Foreign Minister to convene the Commonwealth and Developing Small States Foreign Ministers Meeting in Perth on 25 October 2011. I look forward to attending this meeting. We hope that this meeting will give a renewed political direction to the efforts of the developing small states for addressing and prioritizing their challenges.

(b) G 20:

Mr. Chairman, the beauty of the Commonwealth is that it is a cosmopolitan mix. It has five G20 members (Australia, Canada, India, South Africa and United Kingdom) as well as many of the smallest economies of the world among its 49 other members. It is now universally accepted that even the richest countries cannot prosper alone without the survival of the smaller economies. It is important the voice of the non-G20 members be heard at the G20 meetings through the G20 members of the Commonwealth. It is expected that the forthcoming Cannes Summit of G20 to be held on 3-4 November 2011 may address, among others, issues such as reform of international monetary system, commodity price volatility, infrastructure development, food security, development financing like tax on financial transactions, etc. These issues have strong implications for non-G20 members of the Commonwealth. Apart from the on going contributions of the Commonwealth to the G20 Development Working Group, we need to realize the full potential of the Commonwealth to provide a platform for a more comprehensive dialogue between its G20 and non-G20 members on the mutual concerns.
