



The Commonwealth

Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting 2016

Ministerial Statement

22nd May 2016

1. Commonwealth Health Ministers held their 28th Meeting, in Geneva, Switzerland, on the eve of the 69th World Health Assembly. The theme of the meeting was 'Health Security and Access to Universal Health Coverage'.
2. **2015 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM):** we note the overarching Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and Heads' collective commitment to deliver Goal 3: *Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages*. We acknowledge the Commonwealth Heads of Government priority areas, including security, climate change and migration, and health protection, including the control of communicable diseases, emergency preparedness and the role of health systems to enhance resilience, and a call for collective Commonwealth action for global health security and the reduction of all public health threats, including the global imperative of addressing antimicrobial resistance. Additionally, Heads of Government encouraged action for the final eradication of Polio, and to continue to address the challenges for non-communicable diseases.
3. **Increasing health security and Universal Health Coverage (UHC) challenges:** in view of recent emerging and re-emerging infectious disease outbreaks, such as Ebola, malaria, TB, yellow fever, HIV and AIDS, we acknowledge the threat to health security and affirm the importance of UHC as a key building block. Climate Change disasters are increasing in impact and frequency - whilst environmental health issues continue especially with rapid urbanisation. The recent outbreak of Zika, which has been confirmed in the Americas with the potential to reach new regions, highlights the need to strengthen health systems to ensure resilience.
4. **Advocacy:** we encourage the Commonwealth to continue to advocate using its platforms for the financing of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development with particular reference to those related to health. We recognise the need to acknowledge the graduation of many Commonwealth small states to middle income status, which affects their access to financing. Acknowledging the importance of prevention, promotion and protection, we note reference to the World Federation of Public Health Associations' '*Global Charter for the Public's Health*'.
5. **Health security important for global security:** we recognise the importance of health security as a bridge to peace and stability, and the role that the health



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sector can play in strengthening global security, including preparedness and responses to public health threats and disasters.

6. **Impacts of climate change on health:** we note the ‘One Health’ approach to promote sustainable well-being for all. We welcome the use of multi-risk assessment, multi-sectoral and multi-national policy responses to address climate change, control infectious diseases, as well as enable sustainable policy that benefits social, environmental and economic well-being, in particular for the 31 Commonwealth small state members. Sustainable financing, including adaptation funds, were recognised as key to addressing the impacts of climate change on health. We also commit to taking a ‘One Health’ approach to antimicrobial resistance.
7. **Antimicrobial resistance:** we note that antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a major threat to global health, as well as an economic and security threat, and welcome the Independent Review on AMR. We commit to make AMR a global priority at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2016.
8. **Domestic violence:** we recognise that domestic violence is the greatest cause of morbidity in women and girls and encourage the efforts made by Commonwealth government health agencies, the private sector and civil society groups to combat its effects, and endorse the efforts of the Commonwealth Secretariat to combat its aberrant consequences.
9. **Economic case for investing in health and development to deliver the SDGs and in particular SDG 3:** we recognise the importance of developing cost effective and cost efficient models and approaches to meet the sustainable financing needs of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.
10. **Innovation and sharing knowledge:** we recognise the role of the Commonwealth as a platform for sharing best practices and lessons learned. In this context we welcome the launch of the Commonwealth Health Hub established with a view for enabling capacity on policy for health, as well as sharing innovative solutions for health systems, including eHealth, sustainable investment and financing, research and workforce development. We note the establishment of the Commonwealth Healthcare Business Group as a forum to bring together complementary public, private and third party expertise aimed towards the improvement of health provisions and outcomes of the Commonwealth, led by the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council, and supported by the Government of Malta as the current Chair-In-Office of the Commonwealth.
11. **Engaging young people:** we, the Ministers, endorse the establishment of a Commonwealth Youth Health Network in recognition of the contribution of young people and their potential to make a significant contribution to the achievement of the SDGs.



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12. **Civil society in policy:** we note the civil society participation and contribution to discussions on sustainable financing and encourage their ongoing participation in health policy.
13. **Policy toolkits for capacity:** we recognise the importance of data collection, peer review and/or independent assessment of health systems as a valid mechanism of monitoring International Health Regulations (IHR) and UHC. In this regard, we welcome the development of a Commonwealth Systems Framework for Healthy Policy, and the accompanying Health Protection Policy toolkit.
14. **A Commonwealth collaboration for health policy:** we encourage the reinforcement of partnerships, notably with WHO and regional bodies, to strengthen leadership, support global advocacy, identify future risks and solutions and mobilise resources.
15. We consider the need to reassess existing therapies for substance misuse, including methadone, with a view to detoxification, rehabilitation and reintegration into society.
16. **Theme for the Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting in 2017:** we agree that *‘Sustainable Financing of UHC as an Essential Component for Global Security Including the Reduction of All Forms of Violence’* would be an appropriate theme for the 2017 Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting.