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# Gender and Procurement Stakeholder Meeting

The Joint Office for Commonwealth Permanent Missions to the UN  
800 Second Avenue, Suite 400, New York, N.Y. 10017  
Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March, 11.00 – 13.00

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## **BACKGROUND NOTE**

### **Leveraging Gender-based Approaches to Procurement for Strengthening Women's Economic Empowerment**

#### **Meeting with key stakeholders following CHOGM during 58<sup>th</sup> CSW in partnership with Commonwealth Business Council**

#### **Background Context**

1. According to the World Bank, women procure just 1% of all contracts even though they own around 40% of businesses. This under-representation of women accessing procurement opportunities is constraining Commonwealth countries from reaching their full potential.
2. At the 10<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (10WAMM) Dhaka in June 2013, an inter-sectoral dialogue was held between the private sector and ministers, led by the Commonwealth Business Council (CBC) and the Commonwealth Business Women Network (CBW). CBW is a strategic collaboration between CBC, the International Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW International) and the British Association of Women Entrepreneurs (BAWE), since CHOGM in Perth in 2011 developed in close cooperation with the Commonwealth Secretariat.
3. The development of gender based procurement programmes and access to supply chains was identified as a tangible and impactful approach to support women's economic empowerment and help to drive economic growth. The importance of gender equality, women's economic empowerment and leadership for development was further emphasised in the communiqués of 10WAMM and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in 2013. A Roundtable on enhancing women's economic empowerment was held with CBC at the CHOGM Commonwealth Business Forum in Colombo in November with governments, women in business and the private sector which set out a plan of implementation and a roadmap for women's economic empowerment.
4. The Commonwealth Gender Section in collaboration with CBC is now working on a series of activities to respond to the identified need for women to effectively participate in

the supply chain, generating evidence and tools to assist public and private procurement agents to make the necessary policy and practice shifts a primary focus.

5. The Commonwealth Secretariat is convening the Annual Consultation of National Women's Machinerys (NWMs) during the 58th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York on 16th March 2014 which will be preceded by the meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG) on 15th March.
6. The decision by ITC to hold the Global Platform for Action on Sourcing from Women Vendors Forum and Exhibition in a Commonwealth country for the first time (Rwanda, 15-17 September 2014) provides a major opportunity to build on recent work and reports by the Commonwealth Secretariat and CBC in 2013 on gender and procurement to increase awareness, strengthen advocacy and support policy intervention and development in cooperation with key stakeholders. Models and case studies demonstrating policy changes and progress in increased participation of women in procurement processes being sought.

### **Stakeholders attending**

- Ms Esther Eghobamien, Interim Director, Social Transformation Programmes Division (STPD), Commonwealth Secretariat
- Mr. Arif Zaman, Adviser Commonwealth Business Council and Chair, Commonwealth Businesswomen Network
- Ms. Meg Jones, Senior Officer MDGs, International Trade Centre
- Ms. Freda Miriklis, President, International Federation of Business and Professional Women
- Ms. Elizabeth Vazquez, President, CEO and Co-Founder, WEConnect International

Several Commonwealth member states, international companies and women entrepreneurs are also being invited to join the meeting.

### **Focus and future areas of potential collaboration**

- measuring the current impact of corporate and public sector take-up
- highlighting potential value and benefit and the business case through dialogue/events/meetings with corporates and policy-makers
- developing and delivering trade-related capacity building both online (via CBW BusinessXchange) and face-to-face to support women-owned businesses accessing procurement opportunities in global supply chains (via the Global Platform)

### **Key background materials**

- Commonwealth Secretariat Report on Gender, Trade and Public Procurement
- Commonwealth Business Council 10 WAMM Paper on Gender and Procurement in Global Supply Chains