PRESS RELEASE

23 November 2026

The Commonwealth | ACCREDITED ORGANISATION Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work | CAO 955

PROSPERITY STARTS HERE

COMMONWEALTH CIVIL SOCIETY DECLARATION ON WELLBEING AS A PILLAR OF PROSPERITY

COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING IN ANTIGUA



The Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work (COSW) endorses the *Commonwealth Civil Society Declaration on Wellbeing as a Pillar of Prosperity* launched at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Antigua and Barbuda on 1 – 4 November 2026.

Launching the Declaration, Victoria Rutter (Chair, Commonwealth Health Professions and Partners Alliance (CHPA)) said: "health and wellbeing are about much more than the formal systems for treating ill-health. They are shaped in families and communities, where people live, learn, work and have fun. True prosperity is not measured simply by economic growth, but by the opportunities people have to live healthy, fulfilling lives and to contribute to thriving communities. This Declaration recognises that lasting prosperity requires a joined-up, cross-sector approach, with Commonwealth Accredited Organisations uniquely placed to connect people, sectors and partnerships to turn ambition into action."

COSW President Dr K. S. Ramesh said: "COSW is pleased to support this Declaration and commits to working with Commonwealth member states, the intergovernmental institutions and partner Accredited Organisations to improve health and wellbeing. The regrettable absence of 'social resilience' as an explicit pillar of the Commonwealth Strategic Plan will not deflect from this shared commitment.

Dr Ramesh welcomed the resolve in the CHOGM 2026 communiqué to '*build a more peaceful, healthy, prosperous and resilient Commonwealth for our 2.7 billion people'* and the commitment '*to working towards Universal Health Coverage by 2030'.* He also welcomed the communiqué intention '*to achieve inclusive and sustainable development grounded in our shared commitment to upholding democracy, good governance, the rule of law, and human rights, while ensuring that no Member Country is left behind in the pursuit of prosperity, resilience, **health and wellbeing**, and sustainable growth'.*

"Social workers are key partners in the drive to improve the wellbeing of Commonwealth people. Our role is often quiet and overlooked, but it makes a huge difference for individuals, groups and communities. COSW will continue to ensure that the invaluable contribution of social workers to Commonwealth communities is recognised", Dr Ramesh concluded.

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CONTEXT

COSW is an organisation for citizens of the Commonwealth who are interested in supporting social work and social development. It is supported by social work associations in the Commonwealth. It aims to promote and support communication and collaboration between social workers and social work associations of Commonwealth countries, and to uphold and promote the code of ethics of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW). This statement can be found on the COSW website: https://cosw.info/cosw-news.

COSW is an Accredited Organisation and a core member of the Commonwealth Health Professions and Partners Alliance (CHPA). The COSW General Secretary, David N Jones, is Treasurer of CHPA and Chair of the Independent Forum of Commonwealth Organisations (IFCO).

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 56 independent and equal sovereign states, with a combined population is 2.7 billion, of which more than 60 per cent is aged 29 or under. The Commonwealth spans the globe and includes both advanced economies and developing countries. Thirty-three members are small states, many of which are island nations.

The Commonwealth Secretariat supports member countries to build democratic and inclusive institutions, strengthen governance and promote justice and human rights. Our work helps to grow economies and boost trade, deliver national resilience, empower young people, and address threats such as climate change, debt and inequality.

A network of more than **100 intergovernmental, civil society, cultural and professional organisations** supports member countries, local communities and professional networks.

Commonwealth Heads of Government meet in a summit every two years alongside civil society representatives. As an Accredited Commonwealth Organisation, COSW can make submissions to CHOGM and send representatives to meetings, including observing the meeting of Foreign Ministers, attending the opening ceremony and reception and participating in the People's, Women's and Youth Forums. In the context of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030), CHOGM reviews social policy, security and economic issues and the global situation.

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RESOURCES

Commonwealth Civil Society Declaration on Wellbeing as a Pillar of Prosperity

Commonwealth Disability Inclusion Action Plan

COSW website www.cosw.info

COSW submission to CHOGM 2026 https://cosw.info/chogm-2026/

COSW CHOGM video on COSW YouTube Channel

CHOGM 2026 website https://chogm26.gov.ag/

Commonwealth website https://thecommonwealth.org/

CHOGM 2026 communiqué https://thecommonwealth.org/CHOGM2026/news/chogm-2026-communique

Independent Forum of Commonwealth Organisations website www.ifco.online/

Independent Forum of Commonwealth Organisations submission to CHOGM 2026 https://ifco.online/wp-content/uploads/IFCO-Submission-to-CHOGM-2026.pdf

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COSW SUBMISSION TO CHOGM

The COSW submission to the Heads of Government, which sits alongside the IFCO submission, highlights five key asks based on pan-Commonwealth consultations:

1 Recognise social resilience as central to the Commonwealth's strategic priorities
Education, health, social protection, disability inclusion and social cohesion are essential foundations of resilient societies. Governments should establish or adequately resource social protection systems and underpin them with legislation that reinforces citizens' rights to basic welfare.

2 Establish meaningful strategic partnerships with Accredited Organisations
COSW calls for structured partnerships with Commonwealth Accredited Organisations, including regular and early consultation, genuine engagement, transparency, inclusivity and shared responsibility. The expertise and community reach of civil society organisations should be recognised in shaping and implementing Commonwealth policy.

3 Endorse the Commonwealth Charter for Young Carers
Children and young people with caring responsibilities deserve recognition, support and opportunities to thrive. Formal endorsement of the Charter would demonstrate a commitment to protecting their childhood, emotional and physical development, educational achievement and future opportunities.

4 Exercise inclusive leadership to combat extremism, hate speech and division
Commonwealth leaders should model respect for human dignity, protect minorities and marginalised communities, and promote peaceful and inclusive societies. This includes addressing hate speech, minimising misinformation and disinformation, and protecting and resourcing civil society.

5 Develop innovative co-governance models that uphold First Generations' rights
COSW calls for meaningful engagement and power-sharing with Indigenous and First Generations peoples and communities, including stronger recognition of their rights and principles supporting co-governance within the Commonwealth Charter.

ENDS