



## Council for Education in the Commonwealth

House of Commons – House of Lords

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### Educational Co-operation: 17 CCEM and Beyond

1. This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Commonwealth Education Co-operation, including the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP), inaugurated in Oxford in 1959.
2. The Council for Education in the Commonwealth (CEC) also marks its own 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2009. Like official Commonwealth organisations and programmes, the Council has a record of achievement to celebrate as it prepares to contribute to the next 50 years of educational co-operation between member states.
3. We draw attention to the conclusions of the recent landmark Anniversary Conference in Oxford co-sponsored by CEC, in association with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the University of Oxford. Participants emphasised the need to maintain investment in education in face of the global economic downturn and to take special measures to protect access to learning by population groups most at risk.
4. We urge Government to consider new initiatives in Commonwealth educational co-operation that might appropriately be launched to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and to canvass ideas and proposals with its Commonwealth partners at 17CCEM, soon to meet in Kuala Lumpur. Particular opportunities would include support for expansion of ‘open education resources (OERs)’ available to developing countries and the further development of networks for linking and reciprocal exchange between Commonwealth countries.
5. CEC is particularly concerned about the need to strengthen the CSFP and maintain it as a high-profile, pan-Commonwealth programme. We hope that the UK will be ready at 17CCEM
  - (a) to reach collective agreement with Commonwealth partners to maintain the reciprocal exchange of scholars between the more developed Commonwealth countries; and
  - (b) to increase its contribution to the CSFP Endowment Fund, for the expansion of Scholarships tenable in the developing Commonwealth, if its partners prove willing to make parallel commitments.
6. CEC welcomes the support the UK is providing to help the less developed countries of the Commonwealth to attain the Millennium Development Goals in Education. However, the big increases in primary school enrolment made possible with British assistance will only be consolidated if quality is raised. We draw attention to a new CEC study for the Commonwealth Secretariat on the sustainability of universal primary education in Commonwealth African countries.
7. Unfortunately, an exclusive focus on universal primary-school enrolment is insufficient to the achievement of good basic Education for All. Instead, a holistic approach to the development of quality education is required to strengthen key linkages between different modes of learning at multiple levels. We hope that Britain will play a constructive role in thinking through the implications of the 17CCEM theme *Towards and Beyond Global Goals and Targets in Education*, for itself and for the wider Commonwealth,
8. Education has an important role to play in fostering social cohesion and promoting the values of respect for difference and diversity. In its 2007 report *Civil Paths to Peace* the Commonwealth Commission on Respect and Understanding, chaired by Professor Amartya Sen, advanced an important agenda for action in the area of education. UK domestic and international policy rightly attaches high priority to this agenda. We hope that the Government will be ready to share its insights and experience with others, and to take a lead in developing a Commonwealth education strategy in this area.
9. We also ask Britain to take a lead in elaborating proposals for giving effect to the 2006 Cape Town (16CCEM) Communiqué (para 22) that Ministers would

*constitute a Ministerial Steering Committee to monitor progress on attainment of education related MDGs by Commonwealth member states and review implementation of the educational plan of the Commonwealth Secretariat.*

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