It is indeed an honour for Malta to be hosting the first Women’s Forum as part of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. Convening a Women’s Forum shows the Commonwealth’s commitment to giving recognition to the role of women in society today, and should highlight the opportunities for the often untapped potential of women to the socio-economic agenda and their competence as leaders. The empowerment of women is adamant to the development of an equal and just society throughout the world.

In view of this, the Women’s Forum needs to also bring to the fore the suffering of women across the globe. Even today, women and girls are experiencing harsh realities in their everyday life; as girls are still being denied education, abduction from their families for sexual exploitation, made to suffer the horrific practice of Female Genital Mutilation, and be victims of violence and cruelty.

The time is ripe to move from rhetoric to action. May the Women’s Forum move beyond discussions to entice the Heads of Government present to act to ensure the wellbeing of women and mark an end to the atrocities women and girls are experiencing today. The Commonwealth can effectively be an inspiration to the world in bringing about change in the lives of women and girls.

I augur successful and effective discussions at the Women’s Forum, so that women and girls all over the Commonwealth may have the opportunity to reach their full potential.
The theme chosen for this inaugural Commonwealth Women’s Forum is a clear message supporting the empowerment of women. Women have the potential to change their own economic status, as well as that of the communities and countries in which they live. Yet more often than not, women’s economic contributions go unrecognised, and unequal opportunities between women and men continue to hamper women’s ability to empower themselves and improve their lives. In societies where equality for all is not just a notion but a tangible reality, communities are enriched by the diversity of contributions which transcend gender, in all aspects of life. This is the future we envisage for the one billion women who live in the Commonwealth.

Objectives of the 2015 Women’s Forum:

- Place women’s social and economic issues on the Commonwealth agenda.
- Bring together people from across the globe to share stories of success.
- Raise awareness about matters affecting women’s development in order to tackle poverty and inequality.
- Create a networking platform for building new relationships and reinforcing existing ones.
- Encourage younger generations to secure fulfilment in their lives and those of others.
# Programme

## 22nd November 2015 - INAUGURATION CEREMONY

**19.30**

*Opening Remarks by*

H.E. Kamalesh Sharma, Commonwealth Secretary-General  
The Hon Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of Malta  
Address by  
H.E. Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta

## 23rd November 2015 - DAY ONE

### 09.00 - 9.30

**Official Opening**

Welcome by  
Ms Phyllis Muscat, Head, CHOGM 2015 Taskforce,  
Ms Amelia Kinahoi-Siamomua, Head of Gender, Commonwealth Secretariat  
Dr Claire Cassar, Chair, Women’s Forum Subcommittee

### 09.30 - 10.00

**Main Address**

Dr Lakshmi Puri  
Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

### 10.00 - 11.30

**FIRST PANEL SESSION – WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP**

Lead Speaker - The Hon Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Speaker of Parliament, Bangladesh  
Moderator - Prof Tagaloatele Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand

- **Panel Topics and Speakers**
  - **Women’s Political Leadership** – Dr Josephine Ahikire, Assistant Professor, Makerere University, Uganda  
    Ms Joanna Maycock, Secretary General, European Women’s Lobby  
  - **Women’s Corporate Leadership** - Dr Shaheena Janjuha-Jivraj, Co-founder BoardWalk and Senior Lecturer, Henley Business School  
  - **Women in the Judiciary** - Dr Karen Brewer, General Secretary, CMJA

  **Question and Answer Session**

### 11.30 - 12.00

**Tea/Coffee Break**

### 12.00 - 13.30

**SECOND PANEL SESSION – WOMEN, MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Lead Speaker - Ms Jackie Leonard, Presenter, The Newsroom, BBC World Service  
Moderator – Dr Carmen Sammut, Head of Department, International Relations, University of Malta

- **Panel Topics and Speakers**
  - **Women, Media and Communication** - Ms Baria Alamuddin, Foreign Editor, Al Hayat  
    Dr Brenda Murphy, Senior Lecturer, Gender Studies, University of Malta  
  - **Women’s Technology and Innovation** - Dr Bola Olabisi, CEO, Global Women Inventors & Innovators Network  
    Ms Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Chief Strategic Planning, International Telecommunication Union  
    Ms Elvia George, Chief Finance Officer, Bank of Valletta

  **Question and Answer Session**

### 13.30 - 13.40

Ms Kim Simples Barrow - Women’s Global Fund

### 13.40 - 15.00

**Lunch Break**
Parallel Group Workshops focusing on Thematic Programme Areas to take forward into the CHOGM Communique as mandates for the Commonwealth
(Participants will be given the option to select a workshop in which to participate).

**Third Panel Session – Women in Social Development**

**Lead Speaker** - Ms Khadija Gbla, Anti-FGM Campaigner

**Moderator** - Dr Marceline Naudi, Head of Department, Gender Studies, University of Malta

**Panel Topics and Speakers**

- **Women and Education** - Dr Winsome Gordon, CEO, Jamaica Teaching Council
  Ms Jude Kelly, Women of the World Festival
- **Women and Health** - Prof Robinson Mbu, Ministry of Public Health, Cameroon
  Dr Felicity Daly, Executive Director, Kaleidoscope Trust
- **Women in Social Enterprise** - Ms Christine Wilson, Head of Research & Engagement, Society, British Council
  Dr Lena Wilson, Chief Executive, Scottish Enterprise

**Question and Answer Session**

**Gala Dinner & Awards Ceremony**

Fort St. Elmo, Valletta

**Day Two – 24th November 2015**

**8.10 – 08.30**

**Plenary Session**

Opening Speech by

Ms Michelle Muscat, Spouse of the Prime Minister of Malta

H.E. Natasha Stott Despoja AM, Ambassador for Women and Girls, Australia

**8.10 – 08.30**

Group Photo

Parallel Group Workshops focusing on Thematic Programme Areas to take forward into the CHOGM Communique as mandates for the Commonwealth

(Coffee break will be served at 10.30).

**9.00 – 13.00**

**Parallel Workshops**

**Group 1**

Women’s Political Empowerment - (CPA-UK, CLGF, GS-ComSec)

Moderator – The Hon Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Speaker of Parliament, Bangladesh

- Ms Fiona Mactaggart, Member of Parliament, UK
- Ms Renée Laiviera, Commissioner & Acting Exec. Director, National Commission for the Promotion of Equality Malta
- Ms Alison Zerafa, Mayor of Cospicua, Malta
- Prof Tagaloatele Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand

**Group 2**

Child/Early and Forced Marriage - (HRUnit-CS)

- Dr Josephine Ojjiambo, Deputy Secretary General (Political), Commonwealth Secretariat
- Dr Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, African Union Goodwill Ambassador for Ending Child Marriage
- Dr Hina Jilani, Member of the Elders Group formed by Nelson Mandela
- The Hon Prof Nkandu Lou, Minister of Gender & Child Development, Zambia
- Dr Karen McKenzie, Head of Human Rights, Commonwealth Secretariat
Women and Enterprise Development - (GS-ComSec)
Moderator – Dr JosAnn Cutajar, Senior Lecturer, Gender Studies, University of Malta

Ms Candace Johnson, Founder, Global Board Ready Women, France
Ms Deborah Leary OBE, CEO, Forensic Pathways, UK
Dr Medha Purao Samant, Chairperson, Annapurna Pariwar, India
Ms Alison Hill, Chief Executive Officer, The Argus Group, Bermuda
Dr Margo Thomas, International Investment Consultant, USA
Ms Freda Miriklis, Co-Chair, Commonwealth Business Women Network, Australia

Gender and Youth Leadership – (RCS and Youth Affairs Division, CS)

Ms Katherine Ellis, Director, Youth Affairs Division, Commonwealth Secretariat
Ms Kim Simplis Barrow, Belize Special Envoy for Children and Women
Ms Sarah Soysa, Coordinator, Commonwealth Youth Gender & Equality Network
Ms Vivian Adhiambo, Youth Leader, UN Women
Mr Jacob Thomas, Member, Commonwealth Youth Gender & Equality Network
Mr Jude Thaddeus Njikem, President, Organisation of African Youth, Cameroon

Gender and Education – (ACU and COL)
Moderator – Mr George Borg, DG, Directorate Educational Services, Malta

Prof Asha Kanwar, President & CEO of COL, Canada
Mr Kodhandaraman Balasubramanian, COL Education Specialist, Canada
Ms Dorothy Gordon, DG, Ghana-India Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence in ICT
Prof Louise Morley, Professor of Education, University of Sussex, UK
Prof Maithree Wickramasinghe, Senior Lecturer, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka
Dr John Kirkland, ACU Deputy Secretary General, UK

13.00 – 14.30  Lunch

14.30 – 16.00  Plenary Session
Moderator – Dr Marceline Naudi, Head of Department, Gender Studies, University of Malta

- Report Back from Groups
- Drafting Committee Meeting finalise Women’s Forum Outcome Document

16.00 – 16.15  Tea/Coffee Break

16.15 – 17.00  Plenary Session
- Presentation Women’s Forum Outcome to Participants
- Discussions

17.00 - 18.00  Closing Ceremony
The Hon Helena Dalli, Minister for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs & Civil Liberties, Malta

This programme is subject to change
Contributing Partners

ACU – Association of Commonwealth Universities
CAPAM – CW Association of Public Administration and Management
CBWN – Commonwealth Business Women’s Network
CLGF – Commonwealth Local Government Forum
CEIC – Commonwealth Enterprise and Institute Council
CMJA – Commonwealth Magistrate and Judges Association
CF – Commonwealth Foundation
COL – Commonwealth of Learning
CPA-UK – Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, United Kingdom
CS/ComSec – Commonwealth Secretariat, London
GS – Gender Section
HEU – Health and Education Unit, Commonwealth Secretariat
HRU – Human Rights Unit, Commonwealth Secretariat
RCS – Royal Commonwealth Society
Public Alliance – Commonwealth Public Broadcasters
World Bank
YD – Youth Division, Commonwealth Secretariat
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