Commonwealth ICT Ministers Forum 2014

Marlborough House, London

3 - 4 March 2014

Agreed text by Commonwealth ICT Ministers Forum on ICTs and Education

Commonwealth ICT Ministers meeting in London in March 2014 confirm that the interface between ICTs and education is one of our highest priorities, and that when used appropriately ICTs can play a transformative role in our societies and economies, particularly with regards to marginalised populations. We also recognise that the level of usage of ICTs in the education systems of our countries varies very significantly, and that good practices can usefully be shared more widely across the Commonwealth.

Four areas of particular importance were identified where action needs to be undertaken: content; infrastructure; capacity development, especially of teachers; and the adoption of a holistic government approach.

We recognise that there are many Commonwealth organisations with interests in education. For example, the Commonwealth Secretariat has prioritised education in its 2013/14-2016/17 Strategic Plan. The 18th Commonwealth Conference of Education Ministers recommended that governments establish firm budgets for the training and continuous professionalisation of staff throughout the sector and that this updating should embrace subject based knowledge, the use of ICTs and the pedagogical abilities necessary to provide the broad range of skills now required by students and society. Similarly, the Commonwealth of Learning is widely respected as one of the leading international organisations focusing on distance learning and open educational resources, the Association of Commonwealth Universities plays a very significant role in higher education across the Commonwealth, and the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation has prioritised skills development and entrepreneurship as one of its priority areas.

We request the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation and the Commonwealth Secretariat to:

- Inform appropriate Commonwealth organisations of our recognition of and interest in these four areas of importance;
- Invite interested organisations to work more closely together in support of these agendas in all Commonwealth governments;

- Respond to specific requests from Commonwealth governments for assistance in these areas, by identifying the most relevant Commonwealth organisations to provide such support and working with them to deliver appropriate solutions.

We identified the following priorities within the four broad areas of particular importance:

Content:
- Local content development of resources for national curricula
- Identification and sharing of examples of existing available high quality content that can be reversioned
- Sharing of good practices in development of content for mobile devices
- The potential of distance-learning through the use of ICTs to support all levels of learning

Infrastructure
- Provision of electricity and Internet connectivity to all formal and informal educational establishments
- The potential of mobile broadband to transform education by offering anywhere anytime learning opportunities

Capacity development
- Effective pre-service and in-service teacher training in the appropriate and effective use of ICTs in education
- Civil Servants require comprehensive training, especially if e-government initiatives are to be promulgated effectively
- Digital literacy ("computeracy") is essential for all citizens if ICTs are to be used effectively, and national ICT literacy programmes can play an important role in achieving this

Holistic government
- For ICT and education initiatives to be successful, it is essential that a joined-up government approach is adopted, whereby ministries of education, ICT/telecommunications, finance and infrastructure/energy are closely involved in formulating national ICT for education policies.