

# News Release

2 June 2023

## Commonwealth organisations strengthen commitment to sustainable urban development.

As Commonwealth cities continue to see rapid population growth, four key Commonwealth organisations have strengthened their commitment to supporting sustainable urbanisation through a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The organisations are:

- The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU)
- The Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA)
- The Commonwealth Association of Planners (CAP)
- The Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF)

The MOU formalises the strategic partnership between the Commonwealth partners to collaboratively advance these objectives as the [Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Initiative](#) (CSCI). Previously the four organisations worked with The Prince's Foundation and the Government of Rwanda to highlight the challenges of rapid urbanisation and climate change in the Commonwealth, and developed a [Call to Action](#) in advance of the last Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kigali, 2022. The CHOGM endorsed the need to address these twin challenges in their Leaders' [Communique](#), and a [Declaration of Sustainable Urbanisation](#) was also adopted.

By 2050, it is estimated that nearly half of the projected increase in the world's urban population will be living in cities and towns in the Commonwealth. The Call to Action asks Commonwealth Members States to prioritise efforts to address rapid urbanisation and sustainable development; and to strengthen inter-disciplinary and multi-level partnerships to deliver sustainable and inclusive urban development. City and local government leaders; built environment professionals including architects, planners, surveyors and engineers; as well as universities and researchers; central governments; civil society; the private sector; and of course, citizens themselves all have a stake in and a role to play in ensuring cities and towns across the Commonwealth are liveable places for all.

The MOU also establishes a framework for the partners to work together in a coordinated and mutually beneficial manner to achieve their shared goals and objectives and to further leverage the power of the Commonwealth to deliver change and innovation.

Because 60% of Commonwealth citizens are under 30 years of age, CSCI partners, working in close collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat, supported the launch of the [Commonwealth Youth for Sustainable Urbanisation](#) network in 2022 to bring together young practitioners to provide a strong youth voice and engagement in the work.

**CLGF Secretary-General, Ms Lucy Slack**, said: "CLGF is delighted to be part of this important partnership spearheading work on sustainable urbanisation in the Commonwealth. Local government is at the heart of cities and communities, and it is critical that we work more collaboratively in developing cities for the future. Through previous collaboration on the Call to Action for Sustainable Urbanisation and other activities, the partnership has already been successful in raising the profile of this issue and advocating for it to be prioritised. With this Memorandum of Understanding, CLGF and our members look forward to continuing our joint efforts and achieving more in terms of both advocacy and implementation. CLGF established the Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Network (CSCN) in 2015 to provide a platform for city leaders to discuss priorities, solutions and best practice and will be a vehicle through which to deliver some of the strategies."

**ACU Secretary General, Dr Joanna Newman**, said, "The ACU is proud to be a part of this important initiative and continue working with our fellow Commonwealth organisations and our member universities to advance sustainable urbanisation in the Commonwealth. Higher education has a critical role to play in tackling the issues of rapid urbanisation and climate change. From teaching architecture to training town planners, from understanding the impact of urbanisation to developing technical and policy solutions, universities are helping to build a more

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sustainable future for our rapidly changing and expanding global populations. Universities also provide a bridge between research, policy and practice, working together with communities, the built environment professions, and local and national government.”

**CAA President, Mr Peter Oborn**, said, “The CAA looks forward to continuing its work with the partners to the Call to Action on Sustainable Urbanisation across the Commonwealth together with the wider Commonwealth family. We are focused on addressing the capacity gaps that have been identified as we tackle the twin challenges posed by climate change and rapid urbanisation and are committed to the task of transforming the Call to Action into a programme of practical action.”

**CAP President, Ms Eleanor Mohammed**, said, “The fastest population and urban growth are happening in areas that are also the most vulnerable to extreme climate events. Good urban planning is vital to sustainable urbanisation and climate action. Along with our partners, CAP will continue to define concrete recommendations to address growing cities, climate change and shelter needs across the Commonwealth.”

**ENDS**

## About the signatories:

- **The Commonwealth Association of Planners** brings together 30 national professional planning organizations representing over 40,000 professional planners. Members organizations operate at all levels of government and in the private sector, non-government organizations and community-based associations. Today the institution plays an increasingly significant role in promoting planning as fundamental for sustainable human settlements, mitigating the impacts of climate change and building resilient communities.
- **The Commonwealth Association of Architects** is an association of national institutes of architects from across the Commonwealth. Its objectives are the advancement of architecture across the Commonwealth and the promotion and acquisition of knowledge of the various arts and sciences connected therewith, with the object of ensuring the maximum contribution by architects to the wellbeing of society. The CAA’s primary focus is on advocacy, capacity building and climate action.

**The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU)** is an international organisation dedicated to bringing universities together to find solutions to global challenges. International collaboration is central to this ambition. Universities are the key to healthier, greener, fairer societies. None of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals can be achieved without the contribution of higher education – through research, innovation, education, and community engagement. The ACU champions higher education as a cornerstone of stronger societies, supporting its members, partners, and stakeholders as they adapt to a changing world. [www.acu.ac.uk](http://www.acu.ac.uk)

- **The Commonwealth Local Government Forum** is a powerful voice for local democracy and sustainable development across the Commonwealth focusing on advocacy, programmes, knowledge sharing and research, and networks. CLGF works closely with its members, which uniquely comprise a range of local government stakeholders: individual councils and cities; national and regional local government associations; government ministries with responsibility for local government; research and academic institutions and individuals and professional bodies. CLGF promotes the role and interests of local government and priorities include good governance and effective service delivery; achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals; decentralisation, sustainable development and urbanisation; gender empowerment, politically and economically; and local economic development.

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**For further information:**

For details about the Call to Action, visit: <https://commonwealthsustainablecities.org/calltoaction/>

For further information contact [info@commonwealthsustainablecities.org](mailto:info@commonwealthsustainablecities.org)

