

IFCO CONNECTS

IFCO NEWSLETTER



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



As many Accredited Organisations (AOs) gear up for CHOGM 2026, IFCO is working hard to protect and sustain the AO space and ensure that the voice of AOs and civil society is present and audible in Antigua and Barbuda. This involves contacts with the host government through the High Commission, the Secretariat, the Foundation, the Commonwealth of Learning and other stakeholders. Research and experience both point to the shrinking space for civil society around the world. It is therefore essential that AOs work together to sustain the Commonwealth's reputation for being open and inclusive and a welcoming space for diverse voices.

IFCO leaders have expressed serious concern at the exclusion of AOs from the Preparatory Committee and submitted a detailed analysis of the basis for engagement set out in the Charter and formal agreements. We are pleased to have secured a lunchtime dialogue session on Day 2 of the People's Forum which will include a range of partners exploring the nature of effective partnership working.



**IFCO IS A
PARTNERSHIP OF
COMMONWEALTH
ACCREDITED
ORGANISATIONS**

IFCO has also given attention to several internal issues as we established the new constitution and good governance arrangements.

I thank the Steering Committee members for their determination and for quickly making the new constitution work in the interest of AOs and the Commonwealth ecosystem. IFCO exists to support Accredited Organisations, so please get in touch if you have queries or need support.

I look forward to seeing several of you at CHOGM in Antigua. We hope to host a welcome reception for representatives of AOs and others. I hope that representatives from your organisations will make themselves known and contribute to our collective presence.

David N Jones

IFCO Chair

Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work



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The Commonwealth Health Professions and Partners Alliance (CHPA) welcomes the renewed partnership between the Commonwealth Secretariat and the World Health Organisation. CHPA Chair Victoria Rutter commented:

“Health and wellbeing underpin the prosperity and resilience of our nations, and achieving meaningful progress requires strong collaboration across governments, health professions, civil society and communities. CHPA looks forward to supporting this renewed commitment and the Secretariat Strategic Plan by bringing together professional organisations and community networks promoting health, wellbeing and social development across the Commonwealth, helping to translate shared priorities into action for the people and communities we serve.”



**WHO AND COMMONWEALTH
SECRETARIAT RENEW
PARTNERSHIP TO STRENGTHEN
HEALTH SYSTEMS AND ADVANCE
UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE**

The Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Hon Shirley Botchwey, and the WHO Director-General, Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus is valid for four years. It reaffirms a shared commitment to improving health and well-being across the Commonwealth's 56 member countries and commits to strengthening collaboration to address pressing global health challenges.



The fifth annual COSW Policy Forum online is held in two sessions on Saturday 26th September 2026, 06.00 – 07.30 or 16.30 – 18.00 (UTC/GMT). Minds Without Borders focuses on connecting resilient communities and advancing mental health across the Commonwealth, and will also present the annual report. More details and the Zoom link are available at COSW



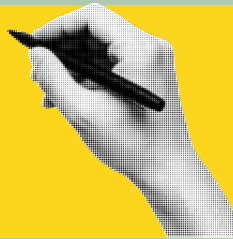
**SUBMISSION OF ANNUAL
ACTIVITY REPORTS TO THE
COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT.**

DEADLINE: WEDNESDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2026

Any Accredited Organisation that has not submitted an annual report on the Secretariat platform should do so urgently, even if it is a few days late.

Events & Programs Calendar

Here is a detailed look at our upcoming schedule.
We invite you to join us for learning, fellowship,
and service.



**IFCO-led CHOGM Dialogue @
Commonwealth People's Forum:**



Dynamic partnerships for positive outcomes
2 November 13.30-14.30

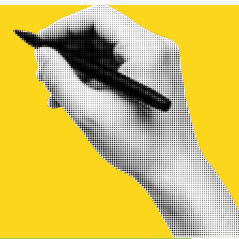
This lunchtime dialogue, convened by IFCO on behalf of 18 Accredited Organisations (AOs), during the Commonwealth People's Forum in Antigua and Barbuda will bring together representatives from civil society, member states, regional bodies (including CARICOM), intergovernmental institutions and the many representatives of (AOs) from Commonwealth countries to share stories of partnership – both challenges and successes – when addressing climate justice, economic inclusion, freedom of expression and social inclusion. Drawing on the submission to CHOGM by AOs, the dialogue will aim to open a pan-Commonwealth debate on partnership working, capturing good practice which will be the foundation for continued dialogue between civil society, AOs, and Commonwealth institutional partners designed to improve the lives of Commonwealth peoples.

PREPCOM EXCLUSION

AOs were not given access to the Preparatory Committee to present the collective submission for CHOGM. This is a significant break with previous practice over the past 20 or more years, when AOs had been invited to make a presentation to the COW and meet High Commissioners in person. A letter and an attached paper have been sent to the Secretary General which sets out the previous practice relating to the Committee of the Whole and chapter and verse of agreements, previous protocols and international practice in other organisations. A meeting with the Secretary General has been promised.

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ODI Global

STATE OF THE COMMONWEALTH SMALL STATES: **BUILDING RESILIENCE AND STRATEGIC RELEVANCE**

08 Oct Time (GMT +01) 15:30 17:00



As Commonwealth Ministers prepare for the Commonwealth Ministerial Meeting on Small States (CMMSS) on the margins of the CHOGM 2026, this joint Webinar conversation by the **Commonwealth Secretariat** and **ODI Global's Resilient and Sustainable Islands Initiative (RESI)**, will help inform the policy discussions on how small states cannot merely adapt to change but actively shape the future development agenda.

Online only (webinar).
[Register here.](#)



— COMMONWEALTH —
ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS

On 19 August 2026, the repatriation of **84 Namibian ancestral remains** to Cape Town was a day of profound historical significance for Namibia, South Africa, and the international museum community. It was also a day for the Commonwealth Association of Museums (CAM) to pause to honour and remember Dr Jeremy Silvester.

Jeremy dedicated much of his life to Namibian heritage and to challenging the colonial legacies that continue to shape museums. As **Director of the Museums Association of Namibia** and a longstanding member and Board member of CAM, he placed restitution, repatriation and the ethical management of Ancestral Remains firmly on the agenda of museums in southern Africa and internationally. His advocacy helped inspire a generation of museum professionals to understand that repatriation is simply about human rights, but about dignity; and museums have a responsibility to help repair the harms of the past.

Find more information [here.](#)

The Iwokrama International Centre (IIC) has announced that the British Chamber of Commerce Guyana will provide annual funding over the next three years to support the Centre's work under the Global Biodiversity Alliance (GBA).

Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development was established in 1996 through a partnership between the Government of Guyana and the Commonwealth Secretariat, under the patronage of His Majesty King Charles III. It manages 371,000 hectares of tropical rainforest dedicated to pioneering the future of sustainability. <https://iwokrama.org/>

This project was launched and promoted in the Commonwealth Secretariat by Richard Bourne, a former CHRl Director and current member of the Commonwealth Association

Read more [here](#).

AO SPOTLIGHT



THE COMMONWEALTH DISABLED PEOPLE'S FORUM

The Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum (CDPF) has full members in 51 Commonwealth Countries and a presence in a further 3. In addition, there are a further 60 Associate members covering particular regions, types of impairment or representing disabled youth or women in their countries.

The **purpose** of CDPF is to bring disabled people together, regardless of type of impairment, gender, age, race, indigenous & geographical background, religion, political affiliation from all countries of the Commonwealth, with a view to having one voice to advocate for **promotion and equalisation of opportunities for all disabled people**. Earlier this month, Tonga ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, meaning all Commonwealth members have now ratified the Treaty, though progress on implementation is very uneven. **The Disability Inclusion Action Plan, agreed by the Law Ministers of all 56 member countries, will be approved by CHOGM.** On 5th November, the day after CHOGM, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum are jointly organising a **Day's Symposium Implementing Disability Rights Across the Commonwealth**. Please apply if you want to attend. This is supported by IFCO and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

The Caribbean Development Bank are funding 40 places for Caribbean activists and half costs. The rest of the costs will be met by a CDPF grant from UKFCDO. CDPF strongly hopes these efforts will advance disability rights and their implementation across the Commonwealth in this 20th Anniversary year of the UNCRPD.

Read more [here](#).

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