

# Consensus on global issues

By HE JACOB ZUMA

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



JACOB ZUMA

was born in 1942 in Inkandla, KwaZulu-Natal. He joined the ANC in 1958 and became a member of its armed wing. In 1963 he was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment on Robben Island. After 12 years spent in exile, he returned to South Africa to negotiate the transition from the apartheid regime.

In 1991 he was elected ANC Deputy Secretary-General and joined the KwaZulu-Natal provincial government. In 1994, he was elected ANC National Chairperson and served as Deputy President of South Africa from 1999 to 2005. Mr Zuma was elected ANC President in 2007 and President of the Republic of South Africa on 6 May 2009.

Secretary-General Kamallesh Sharma is greeted by President Jacob Zuma in Cape Town

The Commonwealth, an international association of 54 countries spread throughout Africa, Asia, Australasia, the Americas, the Caribbean, Europe, and the Pacific, is unique in its broad membership embracing both the North and South. Despite cultural and geographical differences it offers an opportunity to bridge the North-South divide and contribute to consensus positions on many global issues. The theme for the 2011 Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) is "Building National Resilience, Building Global Resilience".

South Africa supports a resilient and effective Commonwealth in supporting democracy, the rule of law and good governance - the core values that unite all of us. We are looking forward to discussing the recommendations of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) to revitalize this organization. In the spirit of reform South Africa also anticipates a report by the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) on improving the effectiveness of the Commonwealth. The CHOGM will also provide an ideal platform to address a range of critical challenges to the developing world in particular climate change, strengthening the economic and development agendas,

youth empowerment, food security, health and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's).

This year's Commonwealth Theme, focused on the critical issue of "Women as Agents of Change", to address the cardinal role that women in all countries play in society and at the workplace. Women worldwide have endured various forms of gender discrimination and South Africa has placed women at the centre of the struggle for freedom and social transformation. Since attaining democracy in 1994, women in South Africa have enjoyed growing representation in various institutional hierarchies and ample space to make great strides in both public and private sectors. However we still have to work hard as a nation to appoint women in high leadership and management positions, to improve the conditions of the rural women and the education of the girl children for a solid foundation. It is South Africa's commitment to implement the provisions of international Conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW-1981), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), as well as the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (2000) to achieve gender equality and equal enjoyment of all human rights.

Climate change is a very important issue on the CHOGM 2011 agenda and is central in advancing this theme of resilience. South Africa, as incoming COP17/ CMP7 President, is therefore pleased with the Commonwealth Secretary-General's proposal to leaders to renew their commitment to global action on mitigation and adaptation, to improve their financial assistance to the poorest and most vulnerable states to counter the adverse effects of climate change. It is therefore important to advance the COP17/ CMP7 process and the success of the Durban conference. We also actively involved ministers and stakeholders in various regions to work towards a credible, equitable and inclusive outcome.



The Pre-CHOGM Foreign Ministers Meeting and the CHOGM Retreat thus present valuable opportunities for building the political will to achieve credible results in Durban, as well as many other pertinent global issues.

In science and technology, South Africa, partnering with eight African countries, remains steadfast in the bid to bring the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) radio telescope to Africa, to revolutionise science by probing the universe, eventually promoting expertise and bringing infrastructure development. The SKA will be equipped to have 50 times the sensitivity and 10 000 times the survey speed of the best current-day radio telescopes. Africa enjoys a considerable comparative advantage in astronomy due to the excellent conditions for observation on the continent – i.e. access to the Southern skies, very little light pollution, radio-quiet zones, etc., and is therefore well positioned to make unique contributions to international cooperation, hence prioritizing astronomy. South Africa is home to the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT), the single biggest optical telescope in the Southern Hemisphere. Other important initiatives include the collaborative HESS gamma-ray telescope in Namibia, which won the European Union's prestigious Descartes Prize in 2007, and the conversion of redundant telecommunications antennae across the continent into an African radio astronomy VLBI (Very Long Baseline Interferometer) network. In the Karoo the USA-supported Precision Array for Probing the Epoch of Re-ionisation (PAPER) and C-Band All Sky Survey South (C-Bass) telescopes projects are also underway. South Africa is currently building the 64-dish

MeerKAT, a demonstrator radio telescope alongside the proposed SKA core site, which will be one of the world's biggest. Resurgence of astronomy and the SKA bid have influenced the initiation of undergraduate and graduate studies in astrophysics in countries such as Mauritius, Madagascar, Kenya, Mozambique, Ghana, Namibia, Botswana and Zambia.

These issues are pivotal in cementing our commitment to Pan-African Unity and through the African Diaspora Dialogue as well as my African Union mandated role to champion infrastructure development, we will also address Africa's development and negative characterisation. We intend to unlock the intellectual and other potential of all Africans to improve the conditions in the continent, through the institutionalisation of the African Diaspora as the sixth region. With the support of the African Union, Africa's Heads of States and those of the Diaspora will converge in South Africa on 25 May 2012 for a historic gathering to bolster this unity. The expected outcome is a binding Summit declaration, Program of Action, and a practicable Implementation Plan. Projects such as a Skills Data Bank, Remittances Institute, Market Place Investment models and an African News Network will also be considered.

The 2011 CHOGM in Perth provides the Commonwealth community and its leaders with the opportunity to reflect, debate and act on the challenges that face all its members, rich and poor, big and small. These challenges set a daunting task to the developing world and Africa in particular and South Africa looks forward to playing its part therein, towards sustainable and actionable outcomes. E

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The Presidency in Cape Town, South Africa. The Tuynhuys gardens are a landmark of the "Mother City"