03 March 2013, Out of the six sub-regional members of the Commonwealth Secretariat’s Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG), the only sub-region who successfully reported that it had held a meeting, since the last CGPMG meeting in March 2012, to deliberate on the progress of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality (PoA) was the Pacific.

The Pacific report was delivered by the Hon. Lord Vaea from the Kingdom of Tonga, Minister of Internal Affairs of which the Women’s Affairs falls under. Highlighted in the report were key themes that had been deliberated on at the sub-regional meeting in February 2013.

The report stated that for the Pacific member countries there was a focus on the development of relevant policy and legal in regards to addressing violence against women and temporary special measures to increase the participation of women in politics. Progressing law reform to ensure compliance with CEDAW in general was also noted in the region in the last 12 months.
The report also noted that in terms of the challenges faced by the Pacific sub-region, the lack of political will and support for the work on gender was noted. Financial and capacity constraints were also noted, including the demands of reporting and monitoring on a range of gender equality commitments of the national women’s machineries (Women’s Affairs' Divisions or Ministries of Women) where it is a huge challenge faced by the Pacific sub-region.

The report made three concrete recommendations; (1) to harmonise reporting processes on gender equality commitments. It was recommended that the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat could facilitate the harmonisation of reporting, (2) that the Commonwealth Secretariat need to be more visible in the Pacific and (3) the Hon. Lord Vaea, summed up the recommendations with an invitation to the Commonwealth Secretariat to be present at the upcoming Triennial Meeting of Ministers in the Cook Islands in October 2013.

The PoA defines four critical areas for action (1) Gender, Democracy, Peace and Conflict, (2) Gender Human Rights and law (3) Gender, Poverty eradication and economic empowerment and Gender and HIV and AIDS.

[ENDS]