

FOREWORD

Since the late 1980s the Management and Training Services Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat has been providing extensive assistance to Commonwealth governments confronting the challenge of securing sustainable development in the public sector. The Division's initiatives in short- and long-term training programmes, institution-building, advisory services in the area of the environment and sustainable development have been a major stimulus for governments in their individual efforts to integrate environmental concerns in their strategies for national development as well as in providing annual Status of the Environment reports for member countries.

The current widespread debate concerning the environment and options that will best fit national strategies for the challenge of the next century (Agenda 21) touches on the focal nature of the questions concerning the role and responsibilities of the governments of the future. The structure and processes of the overall environment sector underscore the characteristic nature of the requirements in terms of human resource skills as well as institution building capacities for member countries to be able to implement development plans, programmes, projects and activities for sustainable development.

The publication *Biodiversity and Gender for Sustainable Development* is a specialised deliverable which has grown out of many years of sub-regional, regional and pan-Commonwealth experience carried out under the auspices of the Management and Training Services Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, variously focusing on Gender, Environmental Conservation, and Biological Diversity for Sustainable Development. It provides an unprecedented insight into the two subject areas of **Biodiversity** and **Gender**. The publication of *Biodiversity and Gender for Sustainable Development* takes cognisance of the Convention on Biological Diversity which recognises "*the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and affirms the need for the full participation of women at all levels of policy-making and implementation for biological diversity conservation*". This is notwithstanding the fact that both women and men must exist in a mutually-beneficial partnership and strategic alliance that is poised to enable equal say in the decision-making process on the sustainable utilisation of biodiversity as well as facilitate equitable distribution of responsibilities for its conservation. This publication is supplemented by a documentation of case studies and country profiles under the title *Biodiversity and Gender for Sustainable Development: Selected Case Studies and Country Profiles*.

The pivotal role of gender in biodiversity merits special consideration in the formulation of conservation policies, strategies and projects at all levels. The publication *Biodiversity and Gender for Sustainable Development* exactly meets this requirement.

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