



CHOGM seeds

Policy briefings ahead of CHOGM 2022

Issue 1 Reflections on CHOGM's theme

Seed

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Foreword

Crises mark transitions and turning points. And it is exactly at these turning points that crises are productive. This is the moment when we can remove the aftertaste of catastrophe and use it as a “decisive turning point”, as per the meaning of the Greek word *krisis*.

This is our belief too. As Seed, an international research-driven advisory firm, we believe that the present crises can indeed allow us to chart a new path. The seriousness of the threat posed by the numerous crises we have lived through and are still going through, demands us all to do whatever it takes to weather the storm. Yet, our biggest contribution to the future is to learn lessons from our recent past and to change where necessary. We believe that agility is going to be the name of the game. Only the employees, businesses, governments, and societies who are agile will survive and thrive in the future.

Seed has experience within the Commonwealth. Our team have worked at the highest levels of government and have advised numerous governments across the Commonwealth on resilience transformation, e-government, employment, energy and economic diversification.

We have designed policies but more importantly implemented them across governments and setting up delivery teams.

No doubt that the world will change. Business and trade will change. Social dynamics and our way of life will change. We need to start thinking of a new normal. It is precisely for this reason, that our recommendations go beyond the immediate and offer a long-run vision for the country.

We believe, more than ever, that this is the right time to define our future. Let us together work on charting an inclusive and sustainable economic model in the long run; where quality is valued more than quantity, where the environment is given its due importance and where the economy works for people.

This is the first in a set of publications that are aimed at sharing our experience and knowledge across various challenges the Commonwealth faces. We hope that this publication can sow the seed of discussion and debate on a more resilient Commonwealth family.

For this to start, we must start delivering, connecting, innovating, and transforming.

JP Fabri
Partner

Delivering a Common Future:

Connecting,
Innovating,
Transforming.

Executive Summary.

After much wait, the dates for the upcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) have been announced. Rwanda will be hosting CHOGM during the week of 20 June 2022 after the much-awaited event was postponed due to COVID-19.

This year's CHOGM is going to be extremely important and critical for Commonwealth Member States especially small island states. Member States are still experiencing the effects of the global pandemic which have been intensified given the energy shortage and global supply side shock. Apart from the human tragedy, COVID has resulted into an economic catastrophe especially for small island states and developing countries. Countries that have an economic dependency on tourism, most island states, have seen their economies contract by quite a significant amount which will greatly reduce their capacity to continue investing in society and in the economy. The need for diversification has never been so urgent. Public finances, already under severe strain, have been hard-hit with debt being a

main preoccupation for leaders. The public health systems have also been under a lot of strain and the global inequality in vaccination programmes have also put such countries. The pandemic has not only highlighted the inherent vulnerability but has underscored the importance as well as the limited resilience that such countries have. In addition to the global woes brought about by COVID, the impact of COP-26 will also be a key agenda item at CHOGM. With the final agreement not living up to the expectation of countries that are suffering the consequences of climate change, here again small island states primarily from the Commonwealth, action on this front needs to be stepped up.

Against this backdrop, the theme for CHOGM 2022 is *'Delivering a Common Future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming.'* Leaders will discuss how to deliver the things which were discussed at CHOGM 2018 in London, which was on the theme 'Towards a Common Future'. In this book, I would like to share some reflections on the theme itself and what way forward one should start planning for CHOGM to truly be a game changer.

Delivering

There is no doubt that the concept of delivering is going to be an important underlying theme of CHOGM. Governments had to deliver on several strategic and critical issues during the pandemic and the delivery of public services especially in a post-pandemic world is going to be central to building back stronger. Here the centre of government and public services will play a key role and digital transformation can support the delivery of services. In fact, e-government needs to have a central place in any recovery plan and strategic vision for a country. Here I believe that the Commonwealth can play a catalyst role by supporting Governments in building their capacity to deliver on essential public services.

Common

The pandemic has shown the world how much of a common reality we face. In a matter of months, a virus in China soon brought the world to a grinding halt and the global economy to a standstill. The climate challenge is also yet another example of our commonality as a global order and human race. This commonality should support our efforts to unite and face common challenges that are abounding and are common in nature. Recognising this commonality should also support multilateral efforts in dealing with these global challenges that otherwise would be impossible to surmount should countries have to act individually. The pandemic should trigger countries even more to work together and face our true commonality as one.

Future

The future remains one which is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. The future is also the main driving force that gives us hope to build better stronger. The world is changing at a fast pace and countries need to be prepared to face such challenges whilst exploiting opportunities. To truly do this, countries need to enhance both their resilience and their readiness to the future especially by future-proofing their economies and societies. The concept of future-proofing needs to play a key role in the discussions at CHOGM especially on how to enhance sustainability, inclusivity, and equality. Education remains the best weapon to face the future and to reduce inequality and poverty. Futureproofing requires resources and therefore the need of debt relief, debt restructuring, and new forms of finance will also play a central part of any future-related discussions.

Connecting

We truly are living in a connecting world. Today not only are we living in a world where countries and humans are more connected than ever before but technology such as the Internet of Things means that even devices are connected and part of our life. This integration of technology and daily life ensures that we can be connected as never before opening realms of possibilities and opportunity for sustainability and inclusivity. The level of connectedness is highly dependent on technology. COVID has accelerated the adoption of technology by individuals, firms, and governments. For an economy that has already embraced and understood that technology will provide the right competitive advantage, the increased adoption of technology will not come as a surprise. Going forward, authorities need to ensure that the digital transformation deepens and that the vision is built around becoming a digital society whereby community life, business life and life as citizens become completely intertwined. Where possible, blockchain technology needs to be adopted by the public service to ensure an added level of trust and efficiency. All economic sectors have the potential of embracing technology including agriculture and the coming together of AI, IoT and blockchain can usher in a digital revolution. This will also support the establishment of a strong innovation ecosystem which will attract start-ups as well as researchers in developing new products and services.

Innovation

In today's world innovation is key. Being innovative requires a supportive ecosystem for it to develop and thrive. The world needs innovative people, firms, industries, and economies to develop new solutions to our problems and challenges. The question that one will naturally ask is, what are the components for a successful ecosystem-based approach to economic design and planning? A good regulatory and legislative framework are central to any ecosystem together with the associated governance and institutional mechanisms. In our experience, we have found that building proactive and innovative regulators is critical to the long-term success of the ecosystem. Regular regulatory reviews and legislative changes to cater for new developments and trends are fundamental for a sector to remain competitive and attractive. Also, regulatory capacity building needs to be regular. In line with this, human talent is also a key pillar of any ecosystem. The power of the ecosystem to attract investment to it depends very much on the availability of skilled and required talent. Talent is nurtured by educational institutions which also need to collaborate with the private sector to develop research, development, and innovation. Clusters also thrive on access to finance as it serves as the blood for the system to grow and develop. Here, innovative financing solutions and products can enhance a sector's attractiveness and its linkages to start-ups. Finally, the general business and market environment needs to be supportive of the ecosystem. Tax systems that are simple and attractive together with investment support schemes are fundamental building blocks. Innovation is multi-faceted and given its strategic importance it truly needs to be a key theme of CHOGM.

Transforming

Moving forward, the ability to transform will be the determinant between winners and losers in a globalised world. Countries need to develop the capacity to transform themselves both from a sectoral and national level. For this transformation to take place, there needs to be a supportive system that can support proactive thinking and investment to ensure that a country's industries remain relevant and future-proof. This thinking needs to be across the country so that even on a national level, regulators and legislators truly believe that transformation is central to achieving resilience and to building back stronger.

CHOGM is finally in sight. With dates set and a theme agreed to, it is imperative for countries and governments to commit to engaging in a proactive and forward-looking discussion. The challenges ahead of us are great, but so are the opportunities. The theme for this year's CHOGM is very apt especially due to the volatile external environment we are living in. We at Seed are hopeful that this year's CHOGM can truly act as a catalyst for countries to embark on a resilience-building programme and commit to

building back stronger. We also look forward to being in Rwanda for this important event and to contribute to the discussion and debate.

This short policy note highlights our reflections on the important theme that was chosen for this meeting. We believe that with the right spirit and coordination, CHOGM can truly add value to the global debate whilst delivering tangible value to its member states and their people.

We at **Seed** are hopeful that this year's **CHOGM** can truly act as a **catalyst** for countries to embark on a **resilience-building programme** and commit to **building back stronger**.

Reflection 1.



Delivering *getting the right things done.*

The concept of delivery, particularly government delivery as well delivery of public services, has always been important to Governments especially to the centres of government. However, there is no doubt that the events over the past few years have highlighted this even more.

The COVID-19 pandemic has evolved from a major public health crisis to become also a major economic and jobs crisis. Yet, at its core, COVID-19 is just the latest in a growing list of disruptors confronting governments. They are also testimony to a global environment is becoming increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. Tech disruptions, cyberthreats, terrorism, natural hazards – there is no doubt that disruptors abound. Massive societal change and demographic shifts, likewise, demand adaptation and preparation by governments.

While future events may not take the same shape as the pandemic, they WILL require governments to navigate profound disruptions nimbly and effectively. This short note will seek to present an overarching framework based on lessons learnt with a focus on how our governments can navigate a continuously disrupted world whilst ensuring delivery of services.

The pandemic threatened our health, livelihood, and peace of mind – our way of life. In times like this, all the population all need public service organisations to help them stay resilient and emerge stronger. Public services are at the forefront of the crisis. While public emergency response and recovery

capabilities are strong, they are best suited for discrete events with a fixed duration. We face a very different challenge today. Public services must rapidly adjust to this new reality across three overlapping dimensions: crisis response, pandemic operations, and long-term recovery. This is a balancing act in managing the now and the next, the present state and the future reality, or the new normal.

The now. Rising up to the challenge.

As from the very case of transmission and response from a public health authority, it was obvious that government had to deal with several issues concurrently and ensure that it can handle a crisis of unknown proportions and on multiple fronts. The key dimensions that one can highlight are presented below:

- Surge response – People's engagement with public service organisations is surging. They want to know what will happen to the vital services they interact with. Here using technology is critical to ensuring delivery.
- Response governance – Collaboration across an ecosystem of government agencies is at the heart of successfully keeping everyone involved in the COVID response pulling in the same direction. Here the role of delivery management units at the centre of government was key and several lessons should be taken from this experience.
- Communication & collaboration – Trusted information about the pandemic is a lifeline for the people. Data is becoming central to effective government.



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- Economic stability – The pandemic had a very strong effect on the global economy and governments had to intervene forcefully. This brings to the fore the importance of economic diversification and the need to have a diversified economic base.
 - Operational continuity – Operations had to flex as numerous agencies had to deal with new requests and accommodate the safety measures introduced which impinged on operations. Once again, the need for innovation and effective delivery units is critical.
 - Monitoring & reporting – Amid all the noise and uncertainty that surrounds the pandemic, the facts will see us through. Here monitoring and evaluation frameworks need to be a permanent feature of governments.

The next. Preparing for the new normal.

This pandemic will end. When it does, we will reflect on what we have been through – what we have lost and what we have learned. What's heartening is that people are resilient, innovative, and strong. So are public sector organisations.

I am confident that going forward, many of the capabilities we all built in in our public service organisations will be embraced as standard practice. In fact, I am confident that this experience and response to the crisis will place government agencies in a position to make rapid advancements in performance, leaving legacy technology and operations behind in favour of new capabilities adopted during the pandemic.

There are five main lessons that can be distilled and which can be described as forces of change in public sector organisations:

- Flexible workforce – To keep the workforce safe, public organisations transitioned employees to remote working status during the crisis. With all the logistics and security issues addressed, there is no reason for this to disappear when the crisis ends.
- Break the silos – Building on the networks formed during the crisis, public sectors need to continue working more closely across ministries and agencies.
- Embrace digital – The crisis has shown that public services need to be digital to the core to build additional resilience. More work needs to be done to deepen digitalization and to ensure that the mentality is truly digital and seamless. This will bring benefits to all.
- Secure supply chains – Supply chains had to be assessed and strengthened. In the future, public sector organisations will continue to adopt new sourcing and data models so that supply chains are flexible and secure.
- The role of AI – AI-powered technology is helping agencies process information quickly and accurately right now. Automation and AI will become more desirable for maintaining service levels. The future will see greater adoption of AI across public organisations. With it will come new roles, new governance, and new public service delivery models.



Facing future disruptions

The future environment remains highly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. Different shocks will ask from our organisations a response, not necessarily as that necessitated by the pandemic, but we will still have to rise up to the challenge.

Governments will need enhanced capabilities in three areas to help navigate both current uncertainties and tomorrow's even more uncertain world:

- **Foresight** - Identifying forces and events that could place unprecedented demands on governments and their mission but could also create new opportunities for governments. Foresight abilities generally focus on two themes – understanding trends and uncertainties and analysing scenarios. The key is to use foresight as a mechanism to build organizational bias toward action rather than paralysis in the face of uncertainty.
- **Agility** - Adjusting quickly to changes affecting customers, operations, and the broader ecosystem. Agility requires organizational characteristics that allow resources, data and staffing to flow and adapt as needed. This means, becoming an

adaptable organization, driven by fast, flexible decision-making that learns and adapts constantly.

- **Resilience** - Withstanding and recovering from disruptions. Investing in resilience can help organisations structure their processes, resources, and systems to better withstand future disruptions, so that performance will remain relatively unaffected or “bounce back” quickly.

The COVID pandemic will be a turning point for us all, and for everyone we serve as leaders of the public service. This is a challenge to which we have all rose and confronted. This is a time to build and adapt our organisations so they can weather the most unexpected events and disruptors because public service will always remain at the forefront of any crisis.

What is required is a cultural shift, one that recognises that success requires the ability to anticipate, adapt to, and withstand disruptive events. Leaders should embrace these capabilities for the organization while developing their own skills in foresight, agility, and resilience. CHOGM therefore offers the right forum for all of this to be internalized.

Reflection 2



Common *we are in this together.*

A number of events over the past few years have highlighted what common really means in a global economy.

There is no doubt that we are living in a world that has never been so interconnected and interwoven as now. Globalisation and technology have reduced distances and the world economy is today totally interconnected notwithstanding the digital divide that exists and the number of people that are cut off from the world due to poverty.

However, the true commonality of globalisation is much more felt in the adverse effects and their impacts and as we have repeatedly seen over the past few years, an event in one country and quickly trigger a global impact within days. The commonality of threats and adverse effects multiplies in impact and its transmission time continues to reduce itself.

There are a number of global crises that highlight this. This 2008 global financial crisis has shown the world how connected and interwoven the global finance market is. A collapse of the sub-prime mortgage market in the US quickly took the world down with an ensuing global economic recession. Vulnerable countries, such as small island states and low-income developing countries, also suffered both direct and indirect impacts of this crisis as its impact brought the world economy to its knees.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the commonality of a global pandemic and the ensuing

global economic crash. In today's world, especially the pre-COVID one, world travel has never been so high. People were constantly travelling, and this airborne virus spread all over the world in a matter of weeks bringing in a global response which halted economic and social activity. This pandemic truly halted the world. Airports were at a standstill as health authorities tried to manage the public health crisis with contagion rates soaring together with deaths. Public finances were put under immense pressure as governments invested heavily to sustain economic activity and increased the resources for healthcare. The need for vaccines has once again highlighted the inequalities in its global distribution and is further impacting low-income countries. The economic impact has been tremendous especially on government debt around the world. In addition, economies that are highly dependent on tourism, and here many CHOGM countries, especially islands are, suffered the brunt of travel restrictions tilting economies into recessions.

The inactivity during the height of the pandemic has led to a succession of events which have limited supply chains triggered a global shortage and bottleneck in intermediate goods and transportation. Today, cost-push inflation is a global phenomenon which is leading to a rally of inflation prices. This chain of events has highlighted how short the supply chain truly is and how its impact is global in nature.

This cost-push inflation is now being amplified by the war in Ukraine. The conflict has brought to a halt the



world's largest wheat producers and exporters of natural gas. The sanctions imposed by the Western world on Russia have ushered in an era of economic weaponing and warfare which will paralyse the Russian economy, but its backlash will impact us all. The rallying price of commodities especially oil, gas and wheat will impact the global economy and vulnerable states even more.

Finally, climate change is not only a common challenge humanity faces but a threat for vulnerable states that are the victims of a globalized world in this regard. Low lying island states, many of which are members of CHOGM, are suffering the impact of climate change when they are in fact the least contributors to the problem. Various global initiatives including the COP meetings have tried to constrain emissions however they have failed in their ambitions. Climate change today remains a global threat and unless there is a concerted effort to quicken the transition to renewables or cleaner sources of energy, the threat of climate change will only intensify.

Commonality of events and their impact is a real global issue. Many a times it is the commonality of adverse events and affects that impacts us all and obviously vulnerable countries are the ones that suffer the most from these direct and indirect effects. It is therefore pertinent that Rwanda will be placing this on the agenda for CHOGM.

There is no doubt that CHOGM comes at a very delicate time for the global economy and as well

for the general world order. With a war happening in Europe which can derail global peace and the global world order, a still fragile global economy with the risks of a global inflation crunch and economic war, coupled with a pandemic that remains present and can mutate; the threats to the global economy remain real and largely on the downside. The discussion at CHOGM needs to be centred around this commonality not only from an adverse impact point of view, but more importantly, on the possibilities and opportunities that exist in this global commonality.

Evidently there is need for more impactful multilateralism. There needs to be an improved sense of solidarity between countries especially when developmental issues are concerned. Global mechanisms that finance climate change as well as the global refinancing debt and a movement for debt swaps and debt cancellation needs to be discussed considering the common threats described earlier.

One hopes that CHOGM rises to this unique occasion and The Commonwealth can reaffirm itself as a voice of reason and a beacon of hope especially for the low income and developing countries. Rwanda has a unique opportunity to anchor itself not only as the leading and most aspirational voice in Africa, based on its successful transformation, but it can today establish itself as a global voice by affirming its policy and visionary leadership of CHOGM later this year.

Reflection 3



Future *aligning our actions today.*

Never has the future been or looked so challenging. Following the COVID pandemic and a fragile economic environment, especially for many states that are dependent on tourism and whose recovery is still gaining momentum, many governments are faced with considerable public debt and little leeway to continue supporting the economy. The war happening in Ukraine is expected to push up the prices for commodities significantly especially wheat, grains, and energy. The challenges relating to climate change are also looming and significant for some member countries.

Over the past few years and even currently, there has been a collective realisation that the global environment is being characterised even more by Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity (VUCA). COVID-19 has been the perfect embodiment of VUCA whereby governments all over the world, have and continue to face all the elements of VUCA.

What is VUCA?

First introduced as a concept by the American War College to describe the global multilateral situation after the Cold War, it draws upon the leadership theories of Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, and has over the years, been increasingly used in business management and strategic leadership.

Volatility is a situation with unstable changes, and unexpected challenges that could last for an unknown duration.

Uncertainty is a situation where there is a lack of predictability, even though the basic cause and effect might be known.

Complexity is a situation with countless interlinked variables and factors, with some or all of the information available or predicted, but the sheer scale of it makes it challenging to process.

Ambiguity is a situation where cause and effect are not so clear, there is no prior experience to fall back on, and the management faces an unclear reality or future filled with countless unknowns.

These are all becoming known adjectives to describe what both governments and companies are facing. However, what is needed is a way to deal with VUCA and which can be used to build a new future for all, countries and companies alike. The answer in dealing with VUCA rests with VUCA 2.0.

What is VUCA 2.0?

Coined by Bill George, a senior fellow at Harvard Business School; Vision, Understanding, Courage and Agility (VUCA 2.0) are seen as the antidote or strategy that companies and countries should adopt to help them navigate an ever-more VUCA environment.

Vision is the ability to see through the fog and plan for ahead for a changed future. Business leaders should use this time to stop, evaluate and plan for the post COVID-19 reality. This phase will pass, and if organisations have planned for what to do when



the time comes, they will be anticipating and ready to move ahead of others who have not. This is also extremely relevant for countries and governments who need to take stock of all the challenges, present and future, and develop a vision for their country to emerge stronger.

Understanding is where leaders first must truly understand their organization's strengths and potential blind spots, to pick the best strategies that play to their advantages. In this stage, information gathering is crucial, not only within the organization but also outside, from as wide a spectrum as possible, ranging from employees, to clients, and even about the industry and economy. This applies to governments and companies alike and here CHOGM and The Commonwealth Secretariat can play a key role, as they already do, in supporting the capacity of governments to understand the external and internal environment.

Courage is the audacity during difficult times to make decisions based on calculated risks that could go against all common practice and beliefs. Sometimes, organizations must consider going against traditionally successful techniques and take risks, because in the rapidly changing world of today, being second to act could be the difference between survival and failure. This is even more so for governments; however, the electoral cycle always threatens such courage.

Agility is essentially the need for organizations to be flexible to change and adapt. While mid and long-term plans are necessary, strategies do have to be flexible enough to rapidly adapt to external circumstances, without affecting or changing the organization's overarching vision and mission. Same goes for governments that have the responsibility to be agile in order to support the country in carving out opportunities.

There is no doubt that CHOGM comes at a very delicate time for the global economy as well for the general world order. With a war happening in Europe which can derail global peace and the global world order, a still fragile global economy with the risks of a global inflation crunch and economic war, coupled with a pandemic that remains present; the threats to the global economy remain real and largely on the downside. The discussion at CHOGM needs future focused. Once again, Rwanda is definitely an inspiration that member states should draw on when attending CHOGM.

Throughout the past decades, Rwanda has embodied what VUCA2.0 is all about. Today it has transformed the country and economy to a pioneering African state which is growing in its international profile and stature. I believe that CHOGM should launch future forums whereby member states come together to share best practices, opportunities and learning experiences in thematic areas. Several key themes will shape the future and will in turn be



shaped by the future. The future of manufacturing, compliance, tax, technology, tourism, democracy, governance, public health and much more need to be central themes of CHOGM. By taking a lead and establishing such future forums, Rwanda will further emphasise its diplomatic credentials but also its visionary and executive credentials.

CHOGM is getting closer. The theme is aspirational for all member states within CHOGM and it demands that there is the right amount of reflection in preparation for such an important event. I believe that although the run-up and the actual event are important, it will be even more important for Rwanda to establish itself as a leader of thought and action. Our common future demands this responsibility and leadership, and I am confident that Rwanda will rise up to the occasion.

CHOGM should launch **future forums** whereby **member states come together** to **share best practices, opportunities** and **learning experiences** in thematic areas

Reflection 4



Connecting *no man is an island.*

The global response to the pandemic has been isolation. As social activity was curtailed and banned, humanity came to realise and appreciate the importance of connection. Social activity is all about this connectivity between people and we came to realise that economic activity is also heavily affected by the power of connectivity and human interaction. Economic sectors such as tourism and hospitality were obviously highly impacted through this curtailment of social activity. We have come to appreciate the importance of being connected not only on an economic level but more importantly human level.

Today, connection and connectivity are key features of the global economy. Technology is supporting this and making connectivity imperative for people to be truly involved and included economically. It is for this specific reason that having connected in the theme is opportune.

The Commonwealth is a diverse set of countries with different development and progress trajectories. With a great number of developing states, some of which are also island states, the focus on connectivity is critical. Home to countries that have been pioneering the use of technology to develop economic sectors and foster social inclusion, there is a great amount of knowledge transfer that can be shared amongst member states for the benefit of all.

A key area that requires connectivity is the public service and government. Here, especially due

to small island states and developing countries, where resources are limited, both financial and human, CHOGM needs to ensure that no one is left behind in connecting their societies digitally through e-government services. Technical support but also the availability of government toolkits and systems that can cater for small states should be developed based on blockchain technology. Here I believe that such systems can support key elements such as identity management, financial inclusion, and document registries. The sharing of information between member states through such blockchain-based systems should also support members with compliance and intelligence requirements to shore up onshore and offshore financial services.

However, being connected through technology can support various ecosystems develop and enhance their economic contribution. Connectivity is important especially for island states that have small domestic markets and need to focus even more on export markets. Here, setting up new services-based economic sectors powered by technology can support countries in bridging the distance and peripherality that islandness brings about. It can also support leap-frogging development processes through technology.

Connectivity is not only about technology but also about regulations and policies that bring populations together as well as member states through projects of shared interest, knowledge transfer, sharing of best practice and establishing centres of excellence.



The Commonwealth has several successes in this regard. The Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub (CCFAH) is one such example. It helps countries to unlock the available climate finance. Through this initiative, small and vulnerable member states are assisted to bid for and gain increased access to climate finance and the Hub has managed to successfully support several member states in procuring climate finance.

In this light, Rwanda can develop legacy programmes and initiatives to support member states increase their connectivity on a number of levels. First, I believe that a central hub should be created to support work in digital transformation. Here the COMNET Foundation for ICT Development (COMNET) should be revived or else a new centre should be developed. COMNET was an independent Foundation whose mission was to help realise the transformational potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for development among Commonwealth and other developing countries. Established in the mid-1990s, through a

joint initiative of the Maltese Government and the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Foundation's major thrust was to facilitate the sharing of experience and capacity-building.

Second, Rwanda should also focus very much on supporting the connectivity of Commonwealth countries in other initiatives including climate change mitigation, good governance, economic resilience, and diversification. Through such centres, member states can enhance their connectedness through exchanges, sharing of best practice and more on order to leverage on collective experience to tackle the great societal challenges of our time.

Rwanda is presiding over a critical CHOGM which comes at a unique and delicate juncture. The theme chosen is aspirational yet very relevant. However, member states and their people require the theme to move from words into concrete action and I am confident that Rwanda can rise up to the occasion and leverage its gravitas to ensure that it will leave its legacy to the Commonwealth in the years to come.

Reflection 5



Innovation *a matter of survival.*

There is no doubt that innovation remains a cornerstone of a modern economy as attested by the World Economic Forum that focuses on innovating ecosystems as key drivers of competitiveness. The pandemic and the response to it has also highlighted the importance of innovation together with the fast and vast improvements in technologies that are disrupting whole economic sectors and jobs.

However, innovation does not happen in a vacuum. It is here that CHOGM needs to play its role of knowledge transfer and supporting member states, especially the developing and small island economies to leap-frog through innovation. I believe that CHOGM should member states through the following 4Ts.

Transformation

The pandemic and the ensuing recovery have shown the importance of transformation on all levels; public and private. CHOGM needs to support countries navigate this transformation especially due to the vast technology changes that are underway. The public sector needs to continuously transform itself to ensure that service is not only digital in delivery but also in mind-set and processing. It is for this reason that public sector reform should be key and a key supporting feature for governments to ensure that their public service is transformed to be an innovative hub aimed at improving the service delivery for the population at large.

Technology

COVID has accelerated the adoption of technology by individuals, firms and governments. Going forward, authorities need to ensure that the digital transformation deepens and that the vision is built around becoming a digital society whereby community life, business life and life as citizens become completely intertwined. Where possible, blockchain technology needs to be adopted by the public service to ensure an added level of trust, efficiency, and a signal that Rwanda is digital to the core. All sectors have the potential of embracing technology including agriculture and the coming together of AI, IoT and blockchain can usher in a digital revolution. This will also support the establishment of a strong innovation ecosystem which will attract start-ups as well as researchers in developing new products and services.

Talent

Sustaining the capacity of human talent is critical to any economy and as the world continues changing requiring new skills and talents, education will remain as the strongest policy to build economic social development. Building the right capacity and skillsets of present and of the future workforce is central to any economic recovery and strategy. This needs to include the full spectrum including the current workforce to embrace tomorrow's skills. Capacity-building within the public service and regulators will be key in sustaining the attractiveness of a jurisdiction and economic hub. Tax policy can also play a key role in attracting foreign talent for



knowledge transfer which can be an important catalyst in building and sustaining home-grown talent. The workforce of the future is changing rapidly together with the requirements needed and this needs to be reflected in the educational systems and structures to truly future proof an economy.

Transition

Economies and countries need to continue transitioning into new forms required to remain competitive and attractive. Here the importance of climate change and environmental protection cannot be underestimated and as countries are supported into a more environmentally conscious economy, the green and blue economies can be developed into key economic sectors.

The reform is agenda is long and the resources are limited. It is precisely for this reason that CHOGM needs to play a key role is supporting countries in taking and implementing an innovative reform

agenda whilst building an innovation ecosystem. Rwanda has the potential to tangibly support member states by focusing efforts on long-standing initiatives that can support member states well beyond CHOGM. An innovation hub should be considered to help member states run innovation workshops, policies, and reforms with the aim of developing a native innovation ecosystem. The Climate Finance Access Hub managed by the Commonwealth should serve as a case study.

Rwanda is presiding over a critical CHOGM which comes at a unique and delicate juncture. The theme chosen is aspirational yet very relevant. However, member states and their people require the theme to move from words into concrete action and I am confident that Rwanda can rise up to the occasion and leverage its gravitas to ensure that it will leave its legacy to the Commonwealth in the years to come.

Reflection 6



Transformation *change is the only constant.*

The crisis triggered by COVID-19 has exposed many weaknesses of the current socioeconomic system: job insecurity for many people, the increase in remote work, the emphasis on essential professions needed to ensure public and vital services, the difficulties felt by healthcare systems in responding to the pandemic as well as a fragile economic web of interconnected economies. In addition, ecosystems are constantly being degraded and greenhouse gases continue to soar, leading to climate change and causing sea level rise, stronger storms, droughts, and wildfires that threaten entire countries, particularly small island states.

The current social, economic, and environmental changes, the ones stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic and the ones that were presented before, bring new challenges and demand reflexive analysis.

The need to respond to the current social changes has triggered a growing international movement of people and organizations at the intersection of the ecology, civil rights and participatory democracy social movements. These relatively new initiatives are often test beds for new forms of cooperation and solidarity that appear to be flourishing. For example, there is now wider appreciation of basic societal services like universal income and health. There is also progress in the adoption of new online work models, such as online education. The pandemic has also led to unprecedented

government actions, demonstrating what it is possible to achieve when there is a will to act.

The pandemic crisis brought about a new opportunity to start a transformation towards a radically different kind of society. However, if we are not fated to go back to normal, we need disruptive changes and a new vision for social innovation. In fact, this is the global need for a transformative movement across a number of key pillars which I believe will be critical for CHOGM to examine. These pillars are: well-being economy, education, finance & banking, future of work, leadership and technology.

Well-being economy

Many of the social and economic problems we witness today have their roots in a deep ecological divide between humans and nature. While it is true that there have been significant improvements in eco-efficiency that will continue in the context of the European Green Deal, these gains will not compensate for the current rate of economic expansion, which will lead to higher natural resources usage. Today, we use more ecological resources than nature can regenerate, and carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere continue to grow. Here, CHOGM needs to start a movement towards a greater focus on the economics of well-being by moving away from a sole GDP metric. The work on the Universal Vulnerability Index is commendable in this regard however more advocacy is needed as well as



support for member states to start thinking more in terms of well-being. Closely related to this concept is the need for energy diversification and a greater use of renewable energy. The blue economy presents unique opportunities for islands to truly diversify economies whilst embedding them within a well-being context.

Education

Sustaining the capacity of human talent is critical to any economy and as the world continues changing requiring new skills and talents, education will remain as the strongest policy to build economic social development. Building the right capacity and skillsets of present and of the future workforce is central to any economic recovery and strategy. This needs to include the full spectrum including the current workforce to embrace tomorrow's skills. The educational set-up needs to change accordingly to future-proof its population. The concept of lifelong learning needs to be entrenched to ensure that workforces develop a resilience to future changes. The digital transformation and COVID have shown that there are no boundaries to education and new technologies such as virtual reality, augmented reality and online learning platforms can bridge the divide that exists. Capacity-building within the public service and regulators will be key in sustaining the attractiveness of a jurisdiction and economic hub. The workforce of the future is changing rapidly together with the requirements needed and this needs to be reflected in the educational systems and structures to truly future proof an economy.

Banking & finance

The disconnect between the financial and real economy produces financial bubbles that are at the root of global economic crises, e.g., the US real estate crisis in 2006, which was followed by the world financial crisis in 2008, and the Euro crisis. Money is a tool for the exchange of goods and services, and it cannot exist unless there are goods produced and resources to produce them; meaning, money has no value without the real economy that it relates to. However, the financial sector treats money as a product. Money itself has become the most traded and profitable product. For development to be truly entrenched, we need to have a financial system that is built to serve citizens and people. Fintech and blockchain together with cryptocurrencies can serve this purpose and here CHOGM needs to look at fintech as a source of financial innovation and inclusion which can support people in their development. Fintech is also a growing economic sector which knows no boundaries and can serve as a key economic sector for small states with a complete ecosystem mushrooming out of it.

Future of work

While unemployment was already one of the most perplexing problems in the economic system before COVID-19, today it is clear that the impact of the pandemic on jobs has been worse than expected—particularly in developing countries with no public means to support workers. However, the problem is much



more complex as the quality of work of those who managed to maintain their paid employment appeared to be downgrading even before the pandemic. In some sectors, value creation spreads over long and global value chains to the point that work contribution is so diluted that it loses "meaning". Human work needs meaning and cannot be taken as "renting time" or "working for money", as people need a connection to their work. One important aspect that needs to be highlighted is that, in the future, there will be a probable shrinkage in the number of jobs and a different skill set required by companies. Therefore, countries need to future-proof their workforce and ensure that their workers are prepared for the future.

Leadership

Leadership and new governance mechanisms are nowadays key aspects in the transition to a more ecological and inclusive society. In fact, unforeseen disruptive events are likely to be more frequent in today's world, and therefore, leaders in general and high-level leaders in particular face new challenges but often appear to fail to anticipate change. The increasing frequency of leadership failure suggests that the established ways of decision making in major companies, civil servants or ministerial cabinets are no longer working. On a national level, the concept of good governance becomes critical. Good governance starts from a recognition that the nation is led for the benefit of others with an obligation of accountability. Leaders are entrusted with authority to manage and to deliver

to their citizens, but they must have the courage, humility, and self-control to put in place checks on their authority. In short, governments must, as the World Bank put it, be "epitomized by predictable, open and enlightened policy making; a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos; an executive arm of government accountable for its actions; and a strong civil society participating in public affairs; and all behaving under the rule of law."

Technology

COVID has accelerated the adoption of technology by individuals, firms, and governments. For an economy that has already embraced and understood that technology will provide the right competitive advantage, the increased adoption of technology will not come as a surprise. Going forward, authorities need to ensure that the digital transformation deepens and that the vision is built around becoming a digital society whereby community life, business life and life as citizens become completely intertwined. Where possible, blockchain technology needs to be adopted by the public service to ensure an added level of trust and efficiency whilst transforming government to be digital to the core. All sectors have the potential of embracing technology including agriculture and the coming together of AI, IoT and blockchain can usher in a digital revolution. This will also support the establishment of a strong innovation ecosystem which will attract start-ups as well as researchers in developing new products and services.



Transformation is all-encompassing. It is a mindset that is needed to future-proof our societies and economies. Transformation is about resilience as well as nurturing the ability to identify and reap opportunities. Transformation is also complex and requires support. To this end, I believe that CHOGM needs to focus on offering the support required for countries to embark on transformation projects

and exercises. A Commonwealth Transformation Lab will be able to bring together experts, academics, policymakers together to discuss best practice models and to support countries in their transformation efforts. Rwanda, a shining example of what transformation is all about, is best placed to champion this initiative.

A **Commonwealth Transformation Lab** will be able to **bring together experts, academics, policymakers** to **discuss best practice models** and to **support countries** in their **transformation efforts.**

Conclusion

The final countdown for CHOGM has started. With thousands of delegates expected to head to Rwanda together with business leaders, civil society groups and leaders as well as heads of governments, the Commonwealth family will come together to discuss the present and future challenges and opportunities.

The challenges are many. So are the opportunities.

CHOGM has a diverse set of members. Home to over 2.5 billion people across 54 member states, the Commonwealth encompasses one-third of the world's population and includes both advanced economies and developing countries, large and small island states. There is unity in this diversity which if leveraged can be a powerful vehicle to support development, progress, inclusion, and growth.

With the challenges that we have witnessed over the past months and continuing at present, primarily driven by slower growth prospects due to a worrying increase in inflation, CHOGM is indeed happening at an opportune time. These challenges add to the ones we have been debating for far too long and include climate change, poverty and ocean pollution.

It is indeed also very opportune that Rwanda is hosting this CHOGM. A beacon of transformation and successful regeneration from the ashes to a regional and continental hub, it is a country that embodies the spirit of the Commonwealth and the desire to overturn challenges into opportunities.

With a powerful theme as the one chosen, 'Delivering a Common Future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming', Rwanda has the opportunity to establish itself as an international champion for transformation. We do hope and augur that Rwanda can pioneer a number of free-standing initiatives that will outlive this year's meeting and translate into tangible benefits for member states.

We believe, more than ever, that this is the right time to define our future. Let us together work on charting an inclusive and sustainable economic model in the long run; where quality is valued more than quantity, where the environment is given its due importance and where the economy works for people.

For this to start, we must start delivering, connecting, innovating, and transforming.

The time is now.

Governments are facing many
challenges and disruptions.

We offer policy-makers **support** in **leading,**
transforming and **drawing up policies**
that **improve** people's lives.

About **Seed**

We set up Seed wanting to do things differently.

Seed is an international research-driven advisory firm sought for its holistic approach to strategic, business and policy advisory.

Backed by deep technical expertise and supported by technology, our firm attracts the best people, whilst creating meaningful work.

Our principles and vision define us. We care about making a difference, for our employees, for our clients and the wider community. Our clients enjoy objective advice, clearly expressed. With our help, they make better decisions and get better results.

No matter what sector, size of business or scope of work, we bring together rigour, knowledge, and experience.

Seed is big enough to deliver yet small enough to care.

OUR SOLUTIONS

ECOSYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

Having worked on key economic ecosystems, we bring tangible experience in building and developing cluster-based ecosystems with a focus on tax incentives, sectoral strategies, and talent attraction.

RESILIENCE-BUILDING

Having worked in 9 countries on resilience-building we have the technical and practical experience to support government in their national resilience-building efforts.

GOVERNANCE REFORMS

Our team has assessed and put forward governance reforms in 9 different countries through the implementation of a proprietary governance assessment framework.

POLICY MAKING

Having direct experience, we currently support governments in drawing up policies and strategies both on a sectoral and national level.

REGULATORY DEVELOPMENT

Our team has drawn up and implemented numerous regulations and we can support regulatory authorities in their efforts to develop and implement regulations.

VISIONS & STRATEGIES

Countries require national and sectoral strategies to determine the course they are heading based on future trends and to signal the opportunities for private investment and growth.

DELIVERING IMPACT



OUR STRENGTHS

- Pragmatic approach and proven research tools
- Analytical expertise to extract insights from data
- Experienced local team
- Network of global experts



OUR DIFFERENTIATORS

- Tailored approach
- Unbiased objective outside-in views
- We work with you on the ground
- Multi-disciplinary approach
- Our service offering is holistic



IMPACT

- Deliver solutions that are actionable and measurable
- Results-driven methodology

OUR ASSETS



STRONG TEAM

We offer a committed senior local & international team with deep academic and practical expertise supported by a global network of thematic experts.



DEEP CASE EXPERIENCE & EXCELLENT REFERENCES

Strong track record of cases where the team supported organisations, industries and governments around the world in transformation and strategic planning.



THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

We stand for thought-leadership in highly relevant topics with a research-driven ethos which enables our clients to access a deep level of understanding, insight and analysis.

OUR TRACK RECORD

GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICE – INTERNATIONAL

- Implementation of Governance Assessment Framework: Recommendations for improving governance in Jamaica
- Implementation of Governance Assessment Framework: Recommendations for improving governance in Barbados
- Implementation of Governance Assessment Framework: Recommendations for improving governance in Grenada
- Implementation of Governance Assessment Framework: Recommendations for improving governance in Saint Lucia
- Implementation of Governance Assessment Framework: Recommendations for improving governance in Seychelles
- Implementation of Governance Assessment Framework: Recommendations for improving governance in Tonga
- Implementation of Governance Assessment Framework: Recommendations for improving governance in Papua New Guinea
- Implementation of Governance Assessment Framework: Recommendations for improving governance in Solomon Islands
- Implementation of Governance Assessment Framework: Recommendations for improving governance in Samoa

GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICE – MALTA

- National Employment Policy, 2021
- Malta National Productivity Report, 2020, 2021
- Skills Gap Analysis of the local Digital Economy
- National Economic Risk Assessment with reference to the gaming sector in Malta which directly accounts for 12% of the Maltese economy
- An analysis on the impact of foreign workers in Malta; which currently accounts for around 20% of the total labour supply in the country
- Economic impact analysis to examine the potential effect and outcome of a proposed direct route operation between Malta and another long-haul destination
- Review of one of the main Public Service Obligations in Malta to examine claim for higher subsidies
- An evaluation on behalf of Transport Malta Authority to assess the impact on car registration tax and annual licence resulting from the change in the emission test
- National economic and market review of the English Language sector in Malta
- Served on a national task force jointly set up by Air Malta and the Malta Tourism Authority to analyse performance in key markets and report on required measures to stimulate these markets
- Analysis of fixed telephony and mobile telephony markets to assess the extent of competition in these markets. Findings were documented and submitted for national consultation, and were also presented to the EU Commission for approval. The mobile telephony market in Malta was deregulated after the analysis established that the market was effectively competitive
- Malta pension reform white paper – 2004.
- Malta pension final report – 2005; 2010; 2015, 2020
- Retirement income and financial capability strategy for Malta– 2017–2019; 2022–2025

OUR TRACK RECORD

- Regional development strategy for Gozo – 2021-2030.
- White paper on medicine entitlement reform in Malta – 2013.
- Consolidation of social security means tested benefits, Malta
- Malta Public service reform strategy, 2012.
- White Paper on Public Services Act, Malta – 2004.
- Policy for Independent Supported Living – 2012
- Malta local councils strategy and reform – 1994-1998
- Malta's Income tax strategy and reform; including implementation of ICT – 1993-1998
- Malta Rent reform (2008).
- Designed and reformed the human resource management framework, financial resource management framework of Government of Malta (1993-1998) and Quality Service Charter Strategy and launch (1995-1999).

ICT – MALTA

- National Blockchain Strategy, 2015
- National AI Vision, 2018
- e-Government Strategy for Malta in 2000.
- Design and implementation of the e-Government Web Framework which included the e-Government DMZ architecture, the e-payment gateway, the e-Government middleware, qualified and advanced electronic signatures respectively, government's secure implementing over 100 e-government services, process and cost reforms.
- Design and implementation of the m-Government Gateway and the launch of m-services.
- Established the STC Training Centre as a public private partnership to build an indigenous supply of ICT technical skills. Introduced vertical academies with CISCO, HP, ISASA, ORACLE, Microsoft, National Computer Centre UK, etc.
- Information Systems Strategic Plan for Government: 1999-2001; 2002-2005; 2006-2008
- Strategy design for remote health monitoring virtual clinical

ICT – OVERSEAS

- Commonwealth Secretariat (COMSEC) in 2013 – author of 2 chapters in Handbook for e-Governance for Small States.
- National ICT Strategy for Belize – preliminary report (2009-2010).
- e-Government strategy for Tonga (2017/18), Swaziland (2011/14), British Virgin Islands (2010).
- Electronic commerce and transactions legislation for Mozambique (2011).
- e-Government and national ICT strategy support to Estonia (bestowed the Order of the Terra Marian (Fourth Class) by the President of Estonia in 2001 (1998-2001).

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- Key Note Paper on e-Government e-Government for Inclusive and Sustainable development for the 11th Commonwealth African Heads of Public Service Forum, Mauritius (2014)
- e-Government, Cyber legislation, and national ICT implementation capacity building programmes in Azerbaijan, Antigua, Barbados, Botswana, Cayman Islands, Jamaica, Lesotho, Jamaica, Mauritius, Pakistan, St Lucia, Samoa, Trinidad and Tobacco, etc. (2008-2016)

ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

- Energy strategy - 2012.
- 144 MW generation strategy and implementation - 2007-2010.
- 200 MW interconnector strategy and implementation - 2007-2010.
- 132KV cable strategy and implementation - 2007-2010.
- Distribution centres and transmission network strategy and implementation - 2007-2010.
- Cash-to-meter strategy and implementation - 2007-2010.
- SAP integrated utility billing strategy (2007-2010).
- National Strategy for Climate Change and Adaptation - 2008-2009
- National Strategy for Policy and Abatement Measures Relating to the Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions - 2010-2012

ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT AND CBAS

- Cost Benefit Assessment for Malta-Sicily Interconnector Cable - €250m
- Cost Benefit Assessment for Malta-Sicily gas and hydrogen pipeline - €400 million
- Cost Benefit Assessment for Life Sciences Park - €36m
- Cost Benefit Assessment for 90MW Wind Farm - €400m
- Cost Benefit Assessment for Digital Gaming Investment - €10m
- Cost Benefit Assessment for Smart Street Lighting - €6.5m
- Cost Benefit Assessment for Energy Retro-fitting in Public Buildings - €20m
- Financial Assessment for the conversion of the Mtarfa Hospital into an Education Mullti-Centre - €4.8m

EDUCATION

- Strategy on Early School Leavers, 2020
- Analysis of consultation feedback to the New Curriculum Framework and co author of New Curriculum Framework Post Consultation Report.
- Drafting of tender and negotiation of 7-year School Transport Agreement with transport providers, and negotiation of 7-year School Transport Agreement with transport providers (€70m).
- Contributed to the reform relating to the introduction of the education college network.

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- Negotiated contract and implemented WAN school and administration network, support services across all state schools, elearning technologies, etc.
- Directed team carrying out reform of school administration.
- Directed team introducing ICT for education
- Directed team carrying out reform of the Education Division.

ICT SECURITY AND PRIVACY

- Led drafting committee re computer misuse section in the Criminal Code.
- Led the drafting committee re the Data Protection Act.
- Built a service line for Deloitte re GDPR assessment, policy design, etc.
- Led and managed through MITA implementation of data protection framework within government.
- Designed and introduced a MITTS Ltd (MITA)-CERT a Malta-CERT institutional framework.
- Led and managed a security audit of MITA, with the assistance of DT in 2000 – 2001.
- Established an Information Security and Risk Management Department within MITA in 2002.
- Introduced CISA certification in MITA becoming de facto national standard.
- Initiated implementation of ISO 17799 (now ISO 27001) within MITA.
- Established a two year Twinning Agreement with QineteQ and MITA for the review and drawing up of ICT Security policies, directives, guidelines, and standards within the Government of Malta.
- Created the EU Communications Office at OPM responsible for electronic communications between Malta and the EU Council and EUDEFNET.



JP Fabri is a Co-Founding Partner of Seed Consultancy, an international-driven research business advisory firm. An economist by profession, JP has amassed local and international experience both in the private and public sector. JP formed part of the private office of the former Prime Minister of Malta and Governor of the Central Bank of Malta. He also has international policy advisory experience after having advised nine governments on economic development.

JP followed post-graduate studies in economics and political economy at the University of Malta and the London School of Economics. Research interests include blockchain, governance and economic resilience and he has published internationally. He is a visiting lecturer at the University of Malta on the economics of blockchain.

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