



**AFRICA CABINET  
GOVERNMENT  
NETWORK**



# **THIRD ROUNDTABLE WORKSHOP FOR AFRICAN CABINET SECRETARIES**

**SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Lilongwe, 18-22 April 2016**



## Acknowledgements

The Africa Cabinet Government Network (ACGN) is deeply grateful to the Government and people of the Republic of Malawi for the welcome, hospitality and opportunities provided to the Network by the Government of Malawi hosting the roundtable in Lilongwe.

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The ACD programme is implemented by Adam Smith International (ASI), a United Kingdom based development consultancy. ACGN wishes to thank the ASI team which supported the workshop and especially John Templeton who prepared this report. Special thanks also to Sarah Johnston who was the official photographer for the meeting and supplied the photos in this report.

**Adam Smith**  
International



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## 1. Executive Summary

This report summarises proceedings of a roundtable workshop for African Cabinet Secretaries held in Lilongwe, Malawi, from 18-22 April 2016. The workshop was the third conducted by the African Cabinet Government network (ACGN): previous workshops were held in Accra, Ghana in April 2015 and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in February 2014.

The ACGN has been set up by Cabinet Secretaries to provide formal and informal opportunities for collaboration, mutual support and the sharing of practical experiences, to build capacity and provide technical help to improve executive government decision making processes across much of Africa. The Network is governed by the Council of African Cabinet Secretaries. For the last three years (2013-2016) ACGN has been supported financially by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), through its *Africa Cabinet Decision-making Programme (ACD)*, which is part of a larger DFID *Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (BCURE)* project.

ACGN's annual Roundtables are seen by member Secretariats as significant opportunities for frank and candid discussion of common concerns and issues. Their principal value is the opportunity for peer to peer confidential discussion of problems and difficulties in a context of seeking advice and practical solutions and alternatives.

The approach taken to the Lilongwe workshop was based on feedback from previous workshops and discussion by the ACGN Executive Committee. The approach featured more time for delegates to discuss issues, discussions being led by delegates, fewer formal presentations, and sufficient programme flexibility to allow detailed exploration of issues which arose from the delegate-led discussions. A key recommendation from earlier workshops had been the need to allow time in the programme for continuing informal interaction between delegates who wished to have further bilateral discussions on specific issues.

The theme of the workshop was: 'Enhancing Government Effectiveness through Evidence-Informed Policy Making'. Under this theme, the focus was on the role of African Cabinet Secretaries and their Secretariats in supporting and enabling both evidence-informed policy development and evidence-informed policy delivery. The workshop considered the institutional and political linkages between the conditions necessary for effective policy development and successful implementation of decisions and programmes.



*The President and Vice President of Malawi with members of ACGN*

Those discussions focussed on how an evidence culture in Cabinet can be encouraged and strengthened, strategies to improve quality of Cabinet proposals, change management strategies within government generally, the need to build policy capacity in line ministries and agencies, engaging with stakeholders, monitoring implementation and measuring results.

Delegates also considered how key centre of government entities, such as Cabinet Secretariats, manage cross-government relationships, the effective use of Cabinet committees, specific challenges associated with the legislative process, and strategies for building capacity for policy analysis in line ministries.

Delegates reported on activities in ACGN member Secretariats since the Accra workshop, with particular reference to the implications of political transition, which a number of jurisdictions had experienced in the previous year or were preparing for.

Following identification of ongoing challenges, working sessions focused on discussing possible solutions. Delegates also reviewed progress in building the ACGN on-line Policy Toolkit that is available online for use by member Secretariats. The toolkit includes a matrix that lists, and allows comparisons of, core information about Cabinet systems and support services of network members: the matrix was updated by delegates during the workshop.

The annual meeting of the Council of African Cabinet Secretaries, which included elections for the President and three regional Vice Presidents, was held during the workshop. The meeting revised the ACGN Charter, including clarification of membership status and confirmation of an annual membership fee agreed at the Accra Roundtable in 2015. The latter was an important step towards sustainability of the ACGN, enabling it to establish a permanent secretariat and continue to provide peer support for evidence-informed decision-making.

The workshop was conducted under Chatham House rules for all sessions (except the official opening), with no delegate to be identified or quoted outside of the workshop and presentations and documents provided by delegates to be shared only with their permission.

## **2. Introduction**

This report outlines the events and proceedings discussions of the third Africa Cabinet Government Network (ACGN) Roundtable Workshop held in Lilongwe from 18-22 April 2016. The Roundtable was jointly hosted by the ACGN and the Government of Malawi, represented by the Office of the President and Cabinet.

Thirty delegates from 12 Cabinet Secretariats (85 per cent of ACGN member Secretariats) attended the Roundtable, with 30 per cent of delegates (8) women. The Cabinet Secretariat of the Kingdom of Lesotho attended for the first time since joining the ACGN in 2015. Six Secretariats (50% of those attending) were represented by Cabinet Secretaries or equivalent. Three other Cabinet Secretaries were unable to attend at short notice because of urgent business.

This high level of participation is in line with the two previous Roundtables. Given the significant work pressures on Cabinet Secretaries and the requirements for them to be available to deal with critical issues at the highest level of government, the attendance outcomes are a clear signal that Cabinet Secretaries regard the Roundtables as worthwhile.



The very substantial contributions of the Government of Malawi were crucial to the success of the workshop. All delegates were both very impressed with and very appreciative of the facilities and support given to the workshop collectively and to delegates individually.



*Participants at work*

The facilities for the workshop were world class. The international conference centre was an exceptional venue and the workshop meeting room was excellent: extremely comfortable with a first class sound system and very efficient and unobtrusive support staff. The catering at the conference centre was very good and the hotel accommodation was also excellent.

The support given to delegates by the Government of Malawi – coordinated by the Office of the President and Cabinet – was equally outstanding. From reception on arrival at Kamuzu International Airport through to departure a week later, all delegates were made to feel exceptionally welcome.

Many delegates commented throughout the week that, by the quality of the support given to the workshop, the Malawi organisers had ‘raised the bar’ substantially for future Roundtables.

The very high level of the Government of Malawi’s support for the workshop was demonstrated by His Excellency the President of Malawi, Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika, making time to perform the Opening Ceremony at State House on the first day and by the presence and very active participation for the entire course of the workshop of the Chief Secretary to the Government of Malawi, Mr George Mkondiwa.

The theme of the workshop was: ‘Enhancing Government Effectiveness through Evidence-Informed Policy Making’. The programme provided for eight working sessions, generally of up to half day duration, along with an Opening and Closing ceremony, the ACGN annual meeting and a site visit outside Lilongwe organised by the Malawi Office of President and Cabinet.

The body of the report begins with the Lilongwe Declaration, followed by description of the Opening Ceremony, summaries of each of the working sessions and a brief outline of the Closing Ceremony. A report of the ACGN annual meeting is in Section 14 of this report.

The discussions were conducted under ‘Chatham House rules’, so even though this report is based on examples and arguments taken from the discussions at the workshop, no contributors or speakers are identified and, with the exception of elements from the public opening ceremony, quotations are not attributed to any individual, organisation or government.

The report is intended to provide delegates with a summary of the issues considered and discussed. It is written so that interested individuals who were not present at the meeting – especially other African Cabinet Secretaries and Secretariat staff – can read a broad outline of the discussions.

### **3. Roundtable objectives**

The principal objective for the workshop was for delegates to be able to share their personal knowledge and experiences and to have the opportunity to relate any particular difficulties or

concerns facing their own Secretariat to any general or systemic issues relevant to Cabinet government being experienced in other jurisdiction(s).

In the context of the Roundtable theme of evidence-informed policy making, objectives included gaining a more thorough understanding of:

- what Cabinets and individual Cabinet members regard as evidence;
- the weight and importance which Cabinets and individual Cabinet members place on having evidence readily available to them as part of the deliberative process (and when that evidence is most helpfully and usefully provided to Cabinet members);
- whether there is a trend towards greater use of, and more informed scrutiny of, evidence to support policy proposals;
- how the quality and impartiality of evidence cited in Cabinet documents is most effectively assessed; and
- how to balance the benefits of community and stakeholder involvement in provision of evidence with the need to preserve confidentiality and government capacity for non-intervention.

In the context of effective implementation and timely reporting back to Cabinet of progress in delivering agreed policies and programmes, objectives included:

- understanding the challenges of implementing Cabinet decisions and of identifying mechanisms that support effective monitoring implementation;
- identifying common characteristics of effective implementation monitoring; and
- identifying how communication strategies support effective implementation monitoring.

In the context of effective mutual support and information sharing, objectives included:

- identifying possible staff exchange training opportunities between Secretariats;
- developing ways to use information technology creatively to address shared problems; and
- expanding the scope of the information resources on the ACGN website.

## 4. Lilongwe Declaration

The Roundtable agreed and issued the following Declaration at the conclusion of the week's deliberations:

### **COUNCIL OF AFRICAN CABINET SECRETARIES LILONGWE DECLARATION**

***We, the Cabinet Secretaries and their representatives assembled in Lilongwe for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Roundtable Meeting of African Cabinet Secretaries, hereby declare the following:***

- 1. That individually and collectively we shall continue to take proactive and practical steps to increase the use of evidence to inform the decision-making of our Cabinets, to better support them to make sound decisions for the benefit of our peoples, decisions that can and will be effectively implemented.***



**2. That, depending on the circumstances in our jurisdictions and the wishes of our Governments, these steps shall variously include:**

- a. Ensuring Cabinet procedures and processes are effective in requiring policy proposals to include evidence that assists Cabinet's decision-making, and ensuring that Cabinet members have sufficient opportunity to review proposals before Cabinet meetings;**
- b. Developing the capacity of our Cabinet Secretariats to promote and review the use of evidence in the preparation of policy proposals for consideration by Cabinet;**
- c. Making more effective use of Cabinet Committees to consider evidence-informed policy proposals and to commission evidence on the wider implications of policy proposals;**
- d. Building the capacity of line Ministries and agencies to prepare evidence-informed policy proposals, to be able to identify and assess relevant evidence and to present it clearly and concisely to Cabinet;**
- e. Ensuring effective liaison and communication between the Cabinet Secretariat and Ministries through Cabinet Liaison Officer networks and similar mechanisms;**
- f. Improving coordination between and within Ministries to devise and deliver the cross-government and cross-sectoral policies and programmes necessary to address the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as continuing and emerging development priorities;**
- g. Undertaking or commissioning research into Cabinet processes and systems, including e-Cabinet, to help identify what works in what situations;**
- h. Continuing to benefit from the experiences of our African peers through an expanded Africa Cabinet Government Network, including its Roundtable meetings, international training programmes, exchange programmes and other information sharing media; and**
- i. Promoting this declaration to our Governments and broader communities.**

**Agreed at Lilongwe, Malawi  
22 April 2016.**

## **5. Opening ceremony**

The Opening Ceremony took place in the Kamuzu Palace, a major public function venue in State House, the official residence of the President of the Republic of Malawi.

The President, His Excellency Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika, in the presence of the Vice-President, Dr. Saulos Klaus Chilima, members of the Malawi Cabinet, Judiciary and Civil Service and heads of diplomatic missions, gave the Opening Address.

President Mutharika's theme was the Africa proverb "a traveller who cannot tell where he is coming from cannot tell where he is going." His Excellency stressed the need for changes in governance and policy processes to always be mindful of the shared history and environment of the African continent. His Excellency said that notwithstanding differences between countries, their common experiences justified common approaches to policy making. The President said he supported a diachronic and endogenous approach to policy making in Africa. "Diachronic because the foresight of policy must be guided by the wisdom of hindsight! Endogenous because policy must be informed by the insight of internal realities and evolve from indigenous situations of our people."



*His Excellency the President of Malawi, Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika giving the keynote address at the official opening of the Roundtable*

His Excellency said that governments in Africa and beyond were under increasing pressure to develop and implement policies that produced visible results in increasingly shorter timeframes. This pressure made the Roundtable's theme of 'Enhancing Government Effectiveness through Evidence-Informed Policy Making' extremely relevant to the challenges faced across Africa. These challenges include poverty, inequality and corruption and, if they were to be effectively addressed, it was critical that decisions be based on the best possible evidence. Policy makers needed evidence to weigh and decide between the various influences on government such as interests, values, and timing.

His Excellency stressed the critical role that Cabinet Secretaries fulfilled in the policy-making process, saying a principal duty of the Cabinet Secretary was to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in decision making, including the availability and relevance of evidence for Cabinet members. This necessarily involved, among other considerations, ensuring that relevant stakeholders at all levels, including the beneficiaries of the policies, were engaged in the policy development process. Haphazard policy development was a significant risk to national and communal development.

In his welcoming address, the Chief Secretary to the Government of Malawi and Secretary to the Cabinet, Mr George Mkondiwa, welcomed delegates to Malawi and outlined Malawi's commitment to ACGN from the outset. Mr Mkondiwa said ACGN membership had produced tangible benefits for Malawi, including having five senior Cabinet Secretariat officials attend the two ACGN training programmes in Kigali in 2014 and Entebbe in 2015. The impact of this training was evident in revised Cabinet processes and procedures and also in a new *Guide to Executive*



*Chief Secretary of Malawi, Mr George Mkondiwa*

*Decision-Making Processes*, which the President had recently approved and would soon officially launch.

Mr Mkondiwa said the importance of entrenching a culture of developing evidence-informed policies and decisions could not be underplayed. Evidence identified in the policy development process helped improve advice to government and the quality of Cabinet deliberations. Governments dealt constantly with a wide range of policy issues that effected societies every day and the impacts of decisions could be profound and severely adverse if they were poorly based. Research, consultations and screening of information was necessary to clearly understand all relevant factors and subsequently map out appropriate courses of action.

Mr Mkondiwa said that it was comforting for those driving the agenda of evidence-informed decision making to know that their efforts were being made easier thanks to the work of the ACGN, which was able to provide advice on how to research what had worked in the past and what had not worked to help facilitate policy formulation.

In his remarks, the ACGN President, Dr Surrur, outlined the history and background of the ACGN, stressing that it was an initiative of Cabinet Secretaries themselves in response to the need to establish a forum for professional support, information exchange and technical development opportunities. Dr Surrur explained that a significant motivating force behind the creation of the ACGN was the realisation that there was a link between poor policy development processes and subsequent implementation failures, which were costly on many levels. Dr Surrur said that one of the drivers of the ACGN was the desire of Cabinet Secretaries to give their Cabinets the tools to be able to assess the quality of proposals, including considerations of total costs, social implications and implementation practicality. Dr Surrur outlined the themes of the Roundtable and their relevance to the Network's objective of improving evidence-informed Cabinet processes.

Dr Surrur outlined the ACGN's future priorities, including expanding membership to Francophone states and seeking a secure, long term funding model which would include self-funding, supplemented by general donor funding and support for specific activities. He emphasised the ACGN's ethos of peer support, sharing mutual experiences and identifying targeted technical assistance using advisers with direct experience of working in Cabinet Secretariats.

*Copies of His Excellency President Mutharika's keynote address and other speeches from the Opening Ceremony will be made available on the ACGN website: [www.CabinetGovernment.net](http://www.CabinetGovernment.net).*



*ACGN President, Dr Surrur giving the ACGN badge to the President of Malawi*

## **6. Developments in member Secretariats since the Accra Roundtable**

The discussion of developments which have occurred in the year since the Accra Roundtable in April 2015 highlighted that most issues and concerns affecting member Secretariats are not unique: they are often being experienced by counterparts.

The discussion underscored that progress is most easily objectively quantifiable in areas where there are specific processes, procedures or requirements which Secretariats themselves must follow or

which Secretariats require line ministries and agencies to follow. Overall, most Secretariats reported progress in improving existing processes and procedures or introducing new processes and procedures. Many of these new or refined mechanisms were adopted following presentations and discussions at the Accra Roundtable.

Some delegates reported that systems and processes had improved and line ministries and agencies were producing better documents and were submitting more of them on time. There was greater awareness of the need for evidence, although results in getting consistent levels and standards of evidence included as a matter of course in Cabinet documents varied significantly.

While attention had been paid to improving processes for developing policy documents, the tasks of preparing and considering proposals were parts of wider government processes. There was also greater focus on the effective implementation of policy decisions and monitoring and reporting back on implementation was more frequently being seen as part of the Cabinet Secretariat's role.

Because there was great interest in learning from colleagues, the discussion of developments since Accra took considerably longer than provisionally programmed, and it was a reflection of the programme's flexibility that additional time was able to be found to continue the discussion.

On process-related developments, Secretariats variously reported:

- The introduction of new Cabinet document tracking systems;
- Increasing use of electronic lodgement processes, including lodgement of updated versions of draft Cabinet documents still being finalised for consideration;
- Cooperation between member Secretariats in delivering staff capacity building and training programmes, with Zambia sending a training team to Zanzibar to deliver a week long programme for Zanzibar Secretariat staff
- Secretariat comments on draft Cabinet documents being provided electronically to originating ministries and agencies;
- Increasing emphasis on regular reporting to Cabinet of implementation monitoring data, reflected in some cases by the allocation of additional staff for the function;
- Greater emphasis on implementation tracking mechanisms being incorporated in proposal documents to encourage effective and verifiable output and outcome monitoring;
- The introduction of revised Cabinet operational and procedural manuals;
- Increasing use of sectoral Cabinet committees, both to consider draft proposals and to consider final proposals;
- Increasing and effective use of Cabinet liaison networks in line ministries and agencies;
- Training programs for members of Cabinet liaison networks, with the dual objectives of building both individual and institutional capacity;
- Adoption of Codes of Practice and Cabinet members' Handbooks to help Cabinet members understand better their legal and accountability responsibilities;
- Increasing interest in the potential efficiency gains from introducing e-Cabinet systems, following the visit by delegates to the Ghanaian Cabinet Room during the Accra Roundtable; and
- Increasing focus on effective management of implementation reporting for high priority development projects and programmes.

Issues such as building, strengthening or diversifying relationships between Secretariats and members of Cabinet or between Secretariats and line ministries are necessarily subjective and can be significantly affected for better or worse by changes in key participants and/or changes in overall political, social and economic environments. Secretariats reported that events during the year such as

general elections, the formation of new governments not as a result of elections but following political realignments, changes of Cabinet members and senior civil service ministry and agency heads had affected the nature and strength of relationships which support Cabinets and that managing these relationship changes was one of the major challenges for some Cabinet Secretaries.

Relationships between Cabinet Secretaries and Presidents or Prime Ministers are critical to the effective operation of government. At times, these relationships can be difficult and the unique and solitary nature of the Cabinet Secretary's position can make them more complex. The relationships between Cabinet Secretaries and Cabinet members are different but they, too, require careful and sensitive management as do the relationships between Secretariat staff and senior management and policy staff of line ministries and agencies.

The Roundtable was seen by all delegates as a unique opportunity to discuss the management of these relationships, either in the formal sessions or with individual colleagues or groups of colleagues. There was great appreciation of the opportunity to be able to share and compare in an environment where others understood the nature of, and nuances inherent in, the Cabinet Secretary's role.

## **7. Evidence-informed policy development**

This session began with a brief, 'scene-setting' presentation outlining considerations relating to the effective use of evidence by Cabinets, beginning with the types of evidence most commonly presented in Cabinet documents. The presentation then discussed the results of a 2013 baseline review of the use of evidence in three countries participating in the Africa Cabinet Decision-making (ACD) programme.

The presentation put the use of evidence in the context of broad develop principles including government ownership of decisions and outcomes, the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness and the New Deal for engagement in fragile states.

Effective use of evidence was also relevant to 'whole of government' issues, such as the impact of government action (or inaction) on different economic and social sectors, effective policy and operational co-ordination and, at the macro level, the legitimacy of policy leadership as evidenced by the capacity of government to be considered by the population to be setting priorities and allocating resources fairly and equitably.

The presentation looked at the benefits of evidence being contestable, particularly through scrutiny by other ministries and agencies as part of an effective process of coordination of draft policy proposals across government and, where appropriate, external stakeholders.

Questions of effective use and contestability of evidence led to discussions of potential strategies to increase the use of evidence in documents being prepared for Cabinet consideration. These strategies include effective procedures and processes to stipulate requirements for evidence, standard formats, use of Cabinet committees, policy review capacities in Cabinet Secretariats, Cabinet liaison officer networks, policy development training of line ministry and agency staff leading to specialist policy units in those ministries and agencies and effective monitoring of implementation to provide 'after the fact' validations of claimed outputs and outcomes.

The presentation also listed the challenges of using evidence more effectively, including difficulties in locating relevant evidence, developing and sustaining Secretariat capacity to assess the quality of evidence cited in proposals being submitted to Cabinet, building capacity in ministries and agencies

to present evidence in useful and succinct forms and encouraging collaboration between Cabinet members and senior policy officials when preparing documents to be considered by Cabinet.

The presentation generated significant discussion, with several recurring themes and issues. The first was the need for financial implications and costs – including whole-of-project cost time spans and the availability of funds – to be agreed between the ministry or agency sponsoring a proposal and the central financial management agency. There was general agreement that these discussions needed to be held well in advance of submissions being listed for Cabinet consideration and the agreed outcome of the discussions included in material submitted to Cabinet.

In the context of assessing the quality and relevance of evidence being presented to Cabinet, the option of giving Cabinet committees a ‘screening’ role to conduct initial reviews of proposals before they were submitted to full Cabinet attracted the interest of a number of delegates. While the benefits in maximising effective use of the time of Presidents, Prime Ministers and senior Cabinet members were recognised, there was concern that using Cabinet committees for ‘first pass’ consideration should be limited to reviewing the policy issues and principles being proposed, rather than Cabinet members being put in the position of trying to assess the accuracy and relevance of supporting ‘evidence’.

Delegates suggested ACGN commission an analysis of the role and purpose of Cabinet committees, focussing on African experiences, with the analysis to include assessment of the circumstances in which Cabinet committees contributed successfully to improving the effectiveness of Cabinet operations and look to identify reasons where Cabinet committees had not worked successfully. The analysis could lead to a ‘good practice’ document being developed, setting out some general principles and suggestions for effective use of Cabinet committees, including issues of chairmanship, remit, membership and frequency of meetings.

There was agreement that substandard proposals being considered in Cabinet discouraged effective discussion and collaboration between Cabinet members and their ministries and agencies.

The issue of stakeholder engagement with the Cabinet process generated considerable discussion, starting with the point at which engagement is most effective.

For some, stakeholder engagement meant ensuring there are effective communication mechanisms to inform communities and affected parties of the detail of decisions after they have been taken. For others, stakeholder engagement was essential in the development of policy proposals designed to overcome specific problems or to bring about specific changes. These different approaches reflect the tensions between the need for governments to be able to consider issues and proposals in relative privacy (so as not to raise unfulfillable community expectations of particular actions) while at the same time wanting to obtain the views and detailed knowledge of stakeholders with specialist understanding and experience of the issue being considered (to try to bring about the best informed and most feasible policy response).

Delegates described the approaches taken in their countries, with many outlining the role of government spokespersons in promptly making details of Cabinet decisions available to the media and the wider community. There is increasing awareness of the benefits of stakeholder participation at an appropriate point in the policy development process, with a number of delegates referring to the speech by the President of Ghana, His Excellency John Dramani Mahama, at the Opening Ceremony for the second ACGN Roundtable in Accra in 2015. President Mahama talked of the need for greater community involvement at the formative stages of the policy development cycle and the benefits of that approach.



The workshop was informed of an ACGN project commencing in Sierra Leone, supported by the Australian Government, to increase the capacity of line Ministries to engage effectively with key stakeholders potentially affected by a proposal. This project to be conducted in 2016 will work with selected Ministries and the Cabinet Secretariat on specific policy proposals and develop a guide for effective stakeholder engagement on proposals for Cabinet. Other delegates advised that few jurisdictions currently have formal guidelines for external stakeholder engagement, although a number of jurisdictions advised that the general consultation requirements, while designed principally to facilitate internal consultation, were sometimes used to facilitate external stakeholder engagement.

## 8. Political transition and the role of Cabinet Secretariats

The session began with a brief presentation which pointed to the wide scope of transition scenarios and the differences between the processes for elections in presidential and parliamentary systems. The presentation referred to the range of transition rules, from conventions and understandings through to specific purpose legislation, including community input into their development. Transition rules were overwhelmingly determined by local factors including the system of government, political cultures, political history and prior or potential conflict.

Cabinet Secretariats can have significant transition roles well before a general election, including advising on previous transitions, advising on appropriate arrangements for an upcoming transition, maintaining the integrity of the Cabinet system (including the security of Cabinet documents) and providing advice to the civil service on transition issues.

Secretariats have significant transition roles after a general election, including advising the new government on machinery of government matters (from Civil Service-wide issues such as the number and responsibilities of Ministries through to purely Cabinet issues such as number and responsibilities of Cabinet sub-committees) and maintaining the effectiveness of evidence-informed policy development processes.



*Participants*

Given these roles can involve dealing with contentious and political issues, maintaining public confidence in the transition process is critical. Community knowledge of the arrangements for the changeover from one government to another and community participation in their development help establish and maintain that public confidence. Civil Service transition stability is critical and is not confined to the 'big issues' that can happen when there is a change of government, but includes many small matters that can quickly turn into 'big issues' if not handled correctly.

The discussion of the role of Secretariats in political transitions covered a broad range of circumstances and underscored the complexity and sensitivity of the issues which Secretariats may be called on to deal with.

Two contemporary examples of both the breadth of circumstances and the range of issues were the transition process in Uganda following the re-election of the President in general elections in February 2016 and the preparations for the establishment of the transitional government of national unity in South Sudan, which was occurring as the Roundtable met. The one constant is that transitions are complex and require careful planning and management.

The South Sudanese situation was recognised by all delegates as extremely difficult, and there was a great deal of support for the South Sudan delegates from their colleagues, particularly from delegates of countries which had experienced transitions which were less than peaceful.

The Uganda transition was more straightforward, but the comments of the Ugandan delegation and the experiences they shared emphasized the necessity and extent of the long term planning and detailed preparation needed to manage a successful change. The Ugandan delegation gave a comprehensive outline of the Cabinet Secretariat's transition planning, including a three day Public Service Readiness Workshop for 80 permanent secretaries and other senior office holders. The workshop was designed to give leadership to the public service and to coordinate public service-wide preparations for the new five-year mandate of the re-elected government. The workshop was also an opportunity to reinforce core principles of public service impartiality and professionalism at the highest levels of the service, with the expectation that these messages would be shared with all staff.

The Ghanaian delegation shared details of that country's legislated transition framework, which includes a special office of Administrator-General, but also stressed the need for effective prior planning and continued responsiveness by the Cabinet Secretariat.

Delegates agreed that, for Cabinet Secretariats, the critical considerations were professionalism and impartiality. While Secretariats normally serve the government of the day, during transitions they are required to be seen to serve the nation more broadly. In a candid discussion of practical ways that Secretariats can properly serve the long term interests of the nation during a transition, the workshop emphasised that Secretariats must play their role with absolute professionalism, absolute objectivity and absolute competence, and be seen to be doing so by all sides.

## **9. The Malawi Cabinet system**

The Chief Secretary to the Government of Malawi and Secretary to the Cabinet, Mr George Mkondiwa, gave the workshop an outline of the Malawi Cabinet system. He reported that, after the Accra Roundtable, Malawi had reviewed its processes and implemented a number of improvements, the culmination of which was a Malawi Government Guide to Executive Decision Making Processes, which would be launched shortly by President Mutharika.

The Chief Secretary explained the system of Principal Secretaries' committees, which considered proposals before the proposals were taken to Cabinet. Mr Mkondiwa said these committees were an essential and effective coordinating mechanism, and were particularly useful in ensuring that Principal Secretaries were aware of the ramifications of the issues about to be discussed in Cabinet, particularly implementation aspects.

Mr Mkondiwa said that Malawi had an active Civil Society sector, so consultation with NGOs and CSOs was a normal element of the policy development process. The Chief Secretary said that he had been very pleased that there had been such good discussion at the Roundtable about the importance of including relevant, verifiable evidence in policy proposals being prepared for Cabinet as this was an area where improvement would always pay significant dividends, particularly in the context of subsequent Parliamentary examination of legislation to implement policy decisions.

Following Chief Secretary Mkondiwa's presentation, delegates were invited to attend and observe a meeting of the Malawi Cabinet's Constitutional, Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee, chaired by the Honourable Samuel Batson Tembenu, Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs. The meeting ran from 9.45 am to 11.30 am. Delegates subsequently said the opportunity to observe the confidential Committee meeting gave a valuable insight into the operations of the Cabinet Committee with responsibilities for legal and legislative coordination.



*ACGN delegates attending a meeting of a Malawi Cabinet Committee*

The Committee meeting highlighted for delegates the critical role normally played by Principal Secretaries' Committees in considering complex proposals before they are considered by Cabinet committees, as well as the benefits of Ministry technical staff attending Cabinet Committee meetings to clarify proposals and the evidence on which they are based.

## 10. The Sustainable Development Goals and the role of Cabinet Secretariats

The session began with a brief, 'scene-setting' presentation outlining the history of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and posing key questions relevant to the workshop theme.

The SDGs were endorsed by world leaders in September 2015 when they adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted in 2000, which set eight anti-poverty targets that the world committed to achieving by 2015. The SDGs, and the related broader sustainability agenda, attempt to address the root causes of poverty and the universal needs for development that works for all people.

In the context of evidence-informed decision making and Cabinet processes, effective implementation of the SDGs involves two key considerations:

1. How far do national development strategies and national development plans align with SDGs?
2. How do SDGs relate to normal Cabinet processes?

### **Sustainable Development Goals**

- *End poverty in all its forms*
- *End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture*
- *Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages*
- *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*
- *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*
- *Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all*

- *Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all*
- *Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*
- *Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation*
- *Reduce inequality within and among countries*
- *Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*
- *Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*
- *Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact*
- *Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development*
- *Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss*
- *Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*
- *Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development*

The SDGs and targets are intended to be integrated, indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable. They seek to take into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development while respecting national policies and priorities. The targets are defined as aspirational, with each government setting its own national targets.

The role of Cabinet Secretariats in relation to SDGs will reflect the specific challenges to achieving sustainable development in each country. Governments are to decide how these aspirational and global targets should be incorporated in national planning processes, policies and strategies.

Delegates reported that there was great interest in and support for the SDGs among their governments and that aligning the intentions and objectives of the 17 SDGs with existing and future national development plans and implementation strategies was a significant structural priority. A number of delegates expressed concern that the SDGs would not be fully effective or realisable until donors committed to aligning their activities with the SDGs. The benefits of the SDGs would not be fully realised if there was a disconnect between structures and commitments of recipient nations and of donors.

The role of Cabinet Secretariats in SDG implementation will vary, taking into account existing institutional arrangements for coordination and monitoring of development planning and implementation reporting. Some Secretariats have a more direct role in the management of development planning prior to Cabinet considering either specific initiatives or sector-wide programmes. Others were less directly involved in the process before submissions were considered by Cabinet but had either a direct or indirect role in the monitoring and reporting back to Cabinet of implementation progress.

Most national development plans incorporate a ‘pillar’ approach with provision for cross cutting issues and delegates generally reported that existing plans had been or were being reviewed to identify the extent of alignment with the SDGs. Successor development plans and implementation strategies inevitably aim for maximum alignment with the SDGs.

One challenge for Secretariats was to establish or strengthen relationships with national planning agencies and implementation bodies to ensure that submissions being prepared for Cabinet to propose new development activities or policies clearly stated how the proposal(s) aligned with the relevant SDGs. Another was to ensure that Cabinet members and the senior administrative leadership of government kept the longer term and aspirational SDGs at the forefront of their collective thinking even at times of pressure caused by immediate and urgent short term issues facing Cabinet.

Practical measures to ensure that SDG considerations were embedded in Cabinet processes included amending Cabinet document checklists to make SDG inclusion or compliance a requirement for all submissions and ensuring consultation with agencies responsible for SDG implementation was mandatory when submissions were being prepared for Cabinet.

Other practical measures included aligning implementation monitoring and reporting processes with the SDG architecture and programming regular opportunities for Cabinet or relevant Cabinet committees to conduct an overarching ‘stocktake’ of SDG progress.

## 11. Site Visit to Malawi Mangoes farm, plant nursery and factory

On Thursday morning, delegates visited the Malawi Mangoes farm, plant nursery and factory near Salima, approximately 90 kilometres from Lilongwe on the shores of Lake Malawi. The inspection was organised by the Office of the President and Cabinet to give delegates the opportunity to inspect a commercial venture supported by the Government of Malawi.

The processing plant produces mango and banana concentrate and puree for export to African, Western and Asian beverage and retail markets. The business model is to source fruit from both smallholder farmers and its own Rainforest Alliance certified plantations.



*Participants at the processing plant*

The commercial driver for the business is the strong growth in demand for mango and banana pulp in both global and regional markets. The business capitalises on low production prices, excellent growing conditions and access to water from Lake Malawi for irrigation.

The decision to export pulp products mitigates the geographical and infrastructure challenges faced by Malawian exporters since pulp does not require the same rapid access to transport hubs as fresh produce.

The company works with local communities to graft preferred mango varieties to local trees, increasing the yield, quality and saleability of the mango puree product. Malawi Mangoes then guarantees to buy all the mangoes grown on these trees. In an area where less than 15% of the

population has regular employment, the company generates over 1,000 jobs in farm work and at their processing plant. The activities of the business impact the livelihoods of up to 12,000 local households.

## **12. Progress towards e-Cabinet**

Delegates to the 2015 Roundtable in Accra visited the Ghana Cabinet Room and saw the information technology services installed in the room. The Ghanaian delegation, led by the Secretary to Cabinet Roger Angsomwine, updated delegates on technical developments and operational improvements to the Ghanaian e-Cabinet system since that visit.

The discussion on e-Cabinet at this Roundtable meeting focussed on both the policy and process advantages it offers and the costs and challenges of introducing secure, reliable and robust technology in countries where infrastructure capacities are variable.

Delegates considered the options of partnerships with donors to introduce e-Cabinet systems and processes, which would lessen costs to host countries. It was agreed that costs are considerable and that donor funding would be, in many cases, necessary to fund detailed consideration of Secretariats' operational needs and the potential benefits to them as well as possible system designs.

The need for host countries to be sure that they retained control of source and access codes of donor funded systems was highlighted. Similarly, the need to manage and set priorities for system rollout was also raised, especially given security concerns, particularly issues relating to vulnerabilities of e-Cabinet systems sharing public data networks. The benefits of staged implementation were discussed, with emphasis on the risk mitigation in situations where existing Cabinet processes and procedures had to be kept operational during the technology rollout.

The benefits of effective e-Cabinet systems were said to go beyond efficiencies in processing, document management and storage. Where electronic access gives Cabinet members simpler and quicker access to Cabinet material, their work in relation to their Cabinet duties is made more effective. One Secretariat with a functioning e-Cabinet system expressed the view that e-Cabinet processes help strengthen the integrity of the overall policy development processes by reducing the amount of lobbying opportunities Cabinet members can be subject to.

A number of Secretariats reported that, because they are at the stage of developing user needs requirements and looking at overall system design parameters, they expressed strong interest in learning more about both the development and implementation experiences of the Ghanaian Secretariat.

The possibility of Secretariats with functioning e-Cabinet systems sending staff to assist other member Secretariats identify potential system benefits and to develop user needs requirements statements was also canvassed.

There was agreement that ACGN should make support for e-Cabinet development a strategic priority for the network over the next 3-5 years and that sources of donor funding should be evaluated creatively to see whether support for e-Cabinet implementation could be possible under current or future programmes.



### 13. ACGN policy toolkit and matrix

The Executive Director briefed the Roundtable on the latest iteration of the ACGN Policy Toolkit. Given that some of the delegates had not previously accessed the toolkit, this briefing highlighted (inter alia):

- How to access the toolkit through the ACGN website;
- The structure of the toolkit and how to navigate through the material it contains;
- Sections on diagnostic tools and Cabinet procedures;
- Specific information, templates and checklists on preparation of evidence-informed policy proposals, including types and uses of evidence, sources of evidence and assessing evidence;
- Information on policy analysis tools, as well as identification and assessment of policy options.

Participants were given an opportunity to access the toolkit during the week using a dedicated computer in the meeting room. This will be followed up with active use of the toolkit during the International Training Workshop for policy analysts planned for later in 2016, as well as follow-up promotion of the toolkit directly to member Secretariats.

Delegations were also asked to update the data for their Secretariat set out in the ACGN Cabinet Secretariats Comparative Matrix, which forms part of the toolkit. The updated Matrix is Annexure 3 of this report.

### 14. Annual Meeting of the Council of African Cabinet Secretaries

An important part of the Roundtable was the annual meeting of the ACGN.

Following reports by the Executive Director on the organisation's activities and finances for 2015, the meeting held a detailed discussion of the ACGN's Charter first approved in February 2014.

This resulted in agreement on a revised Charter (see Annex 4), which:



- Clarified membership eligibility for ACGN and the Council of African Cabinet Secretaries, as well as the relationship between the ACGN and the Council;
- Reflected ACGN's registration in Sierra Leone and the 2015 decision to locate its secretariat in Freetown;
- Incorporated into the Charter the agreement at the 2015 Accra Roundtable to require member Secretariats to pay a USD10,000 annual membership fee, commencing in calendar year 2016, in order to ensure the sustainability of the ACGN;
- Clarified that membership of the ACGN does not confer recognition of member states or support the policies or decisions of their governments; and
- Emphasised that the ACGN is focused on processes and procedures and included an explicit rule that ACGN activities must not be used to promote specific political or policy views.

Consistent with the Charter, the meeting opened up all Executive Committee positions for election for the following two years. The Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service of Sierra Leone, Dr Ernest Surrur, was re-elected as President of the Council of African Cabinet Secretaries and therefore head of the Executive Committee. Mr Roger Angsomwine (Ghana), Mr John Mitala

(Uganda) and Mr George Mikondiwa (Malawi) were elected as Vice Presidents for West Africa, East Africa and Southern Africa respectively.

The meeting also discussed the strategic planning for the ACGN beyond the current DFID support through the Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (BCURE) programme, based on the proposed workplan and budget presented at the Accra Roundtable in 2015. Key results included:

- Plans for a further international training programme for policy analysts later in 2016 (date and location to be confirmed);
- Clarification that ACGN may assist individual member Secretariats to seek donor support, such as the Australian Government funded project on effective stakeholder engagement in Sierra Leone;
- Development of a communications and marketing strategy, to be led by the Botswana delegate;
- Review of membership expansion, including examination of additional English-speaking Secretariats before expansion to Francophone systems (the ACGN Operations Manager to prepare a database of African Cabinet Secretariats to assist the Executive Committee's consideration);
- Examination of ACGN's status as an International NGO and potential relationship with international organisations such as the African Union; and
- Ongoing efforts to seek other donor funding.

## 15. Conclusion

The Workshop concluded on Friday afternoon, 22 April 2016, with delegates adopting the Lilongwe Declaration included in section 4 of this report.

Following final comments from delegates, they were presented with Certificates of Participation by the President of the ACGN, Dr Surrur.

In their final comments, all delegates said they had found the workshop extremely valuable and beneficial. All delegates expressed appreciation for the opportunities for exchange of information and experiences and being able to hear technical details about processes and templates which other Secretariats have developed. All delegates praised the facilities provided for the Roundtable by the Government of Malawi and asked that the Roundtable's deep appreciation and gratitude be conveyed to his Excellency President Mutharika.

Specific comments included

- 'We will benefit greatly from the shared experiences of this week. The session on evidence-informed decision making and the following discussion were particularly valuable. We are particularly interested in getting a copy of Malawi's new Guide to Executive Decision-making Processes after it is launched by the President.'
- 'The week was very beneficial. We learnt a great deal from the formal sessions and also the informal discussions with other delegates outside the conference room. We will be contacting



*ACGN President presenting a certificate to the Cabinet Secretary from Ghana*

a number of other Secretariats to get copies of their revised procedural manuals and templates.'

- 'We learnt a lot from the experiences which other countries shared. What we have heard this week will help us refine our checklists and processes, particularly in relation to identifying the sources and credibility of evidence which has been quoted by ministries in support of their proposals.'
- 'The week was extremely valuable and provided very good information to help us improve service delivery.'
- 'This was my first Roundtable and I was very impressed with the session on transition and the comments relating to outgoing Presidents giving priority to effective implementation of their legacy projects and programmes. It is very relevant to my country as our President's term will be ending shortly.'
- 'Very impressed with the emphasis in President Mutharika's Opening Ceremony speech about solutions to African problems being developed in Africa by Africans. The session of transition was very useful, especially the emphasis on the need for early planning of the arrangements and the benefits of community involvement in their development.'
- 'One of the main takeaways for me was the range of knowledge and experience which we have available within the ACGN and the way that ACGN member countries are helping each other in practical ways such as Zambia's training assistance last year to Zanzibar and Ghana's offer to help Malawi by sending staff to work with Malawi on e-Cabinet user needs requirements.'



*Participants posed for a photo after receiving their certificates*

**Annex One: List of Roundtable Participants**

**Annex Two: Roundtable Programme**

**Annex Three: Revised ACGN Comparative Matrix**

**Annex Four: Revised ACGN Charter.**

## **Annex One: List of Roundtable Participants**

## PARTICIPANTS

SECRETARIAT	TITLE	NAME	POSITION
<b>Botswana</b>	<b>Ms</b>	Kesego Okie	Deputy Permanent Secretary to the Permanent Secretary to the President and Cabinet Secretary
<b>Ghana</b>	Mr	Roger Angsomwine	Secretary to the Cabinet
	Mr	Alhaji Adam Abubakari Sadiq	Director Cabinet Secretariat
	Mr	Anyanah Bismark	Assistant Director Cabinet Secretariat
	Mr	Sumaila Bakari	Assistant Director Cabinet Secretariat
<b>Lesotho</b>	Ms	Thato Masiloane	Deputy Principal Secretary
	Ms	Refiloe Kepa	Director Information
<b>Liberia</b>	Mr	Jordan Sulonteh	Director General, Cabinet Secretariat
<b>Malawi</b>	Mr	George Mkondiwa	Chief Secretary to the Cabinet
	Mr	Luckie Sikwese	Clerk to the Cabinet
	Mrs	Marjorie Chisambo	Director of Cabinet Services
	Mr	Gift Gondwe	Assistant Clerk to the Cabinet
	Mr	Emmanuel Sitolo	Assistant Clerk to the Cabinet
<b>Sierra Leone</b>	Dr	Ernest Surrur	Secretary to the Cabinet/Head of the Civil Service
	Mr	Samuel Bangura	Assistant Secretary to the Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of Civil Service
	Mr	Aloma John Konuwa	Senior ICT Officer/Policy Analyst
<b>Somalia</b>	Dr	Bashir A. Osman	Director General, Council of Ministers and Parliamentary Affairs
	Mr	Mohamed Khalif Farah	Senior Legal Advisor, Council of Ministers
<b>Somaliland</b>	Mr	Sharmake Ahmed Muhumed	Cabinet Secretary
	Mr	Abdilahe Dayib Osman	Deputy Cabinet Secretary
<b>South Sudan</b>	Mr	William Lochi Mauro Lohitomoi	Deputy Secretary General, Ministry of Cabinet Affairs
	Mr	Alier Deng Ruai	Under Secretary, Ministry of Cabinet Affairs
<b>Uganda</b>	Ms	Grace Choda	Under Secretary
	Ms	Patricia Lakidi	Senior Assistant Secretary
<b>Zambia</b>	Mrs	Katongo Chifwepa	Director
	Mrs	Nicolyn Nyoni	Management Analyst
<b>Zanzibar</b>	Mr	Salmin Amour Abdalla	Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet
	Mr	Mgeni Jailani Jecha	Senior Cabinet Secretariat Officer
<b>Support</b>	Dr	Mark Johnston	Executive Director ACGN
	Ms	Finnah Koroma	Operations Manager ACGN
	Mr	John Templeton	Senior Adviser ACGN
	Mr	Felix Edwards	Principal Manager, Adam Smith International (ASI)
	Ms	Michelle Jacob	Manager, Public Sector Governance, ASI
	Mr	Mwaura Ngugi	Administration and Operations Coordinator, ASI
	Ms	Sarah Johnston	ACGN (Photographer)



## **Annex Two: Roundtable Programme**

# THIRD ROUNDTABLE MEETING FOR CABINET SECRETARIES

Lilongwe 18-22 April 2016

**Conference Location:** President Walmont Hotel, Umodzi Park, Chilembwe Road, City Centre, Lilongwe

## PROPOSED PROGRAMME

**Theme:** 'Enhancing Government Effectiveness through Evidence-Informed Policy Making'

**Key features** (based on feedback from previous Roundtables and discussion with Executive Committee):

- More time for delegates to discuss issues, with discussions led by delegates, with fewer presentations and more peer learning.
- More time and flexibility in the programme to allow exploration of issues of common interest.
- Rapporteurs to record main issues and report back to the workshop, with more rapid circulation of Roundtable Report.
- Adequate time for informal interaction between delegates and for communicating with offices and dealing with urgent work issues (including 2 hours for lunch).
- 'Chatham House' rules for all sessions (except the official opening), with no delegate to be identified or quoted and presentations and other documents to be shared only with permission.

Day	Time	Session	Agenda/details
<b>Sunday 17 April</b>	Various	Delegates travel to Lilongwe	
	16:00 19:00	Registration Informal dinner	Conference Centre, downstairs President Walmont Hotel
<b>Monday 18 April Morning</b>	08:15	<b>OPENING CEREMONY</b>	Location: State House  Assemble for transport to State House <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Welcome address by Chief Secretary of Malawi</li> <li>• Address by President of Council of African Cabinet Secretaries</li> <li>• Keynote Address/official opening by HE PRESIDENT OF MALAWI</li> <li>• Vote of thanks</li> <li>• Close</li> <li>• Group photo</li> <li>• Media interviews</li> </ul>
	12:00	Lunch	Provided (Conference Centre)

Day	Time	Session	Agenda/details
<b>Monday</b> <b>18 April</b> Afternoon	14:00	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> (Chairperson: Jordan Sulonteh)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Opening remarks by Dr Surrur and Mr Mkondiwa</li> <li>2. Delegate and secretariat introductions</li> <li>3. Outline of Roundtable programme</li> <li>4. Delegation reports on action from previous Roundtables/challenges</li> <li>5. Key issues facing Cabinet Secretariats - discussion</li> <li>6. Delegation expectations for Roundtable</li> </ol>
	19:00	<b>Welcome Dinner</b>	Welcome Dinner Hosted by Government of Malawi (Sunbird Capital Hotel)
<b>Tuesday</b> <b>19 April</b> Morning	09:00	<b>EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY MAKING</b> (Chairperson: Alhaji Sadiq)	Rapporteur report on previous day <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creating an evidence culture in Cabinet</li> <li>2. Strategies to improve quality of Cabinet proposals</li> <li>3. Change management strategies</li> <li>4. Building policy capacity in line Ministries</li> <li>5. Engaging with stakeholders</li> <li>6. Measuring results</li> <li>7. Use of toolkit</li> </ol>
	12:30	Lunch	Provided (Conference Centre)
<b>Tuesday</b> <b>19 April</b> Afternoon	14:30	<b>POLITICAL TRANSITIONS</b> (Chairperson: TBA)	Role of Cabinet Secretaries in political transitions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Preparing for transitions</li> <li>2. Sustainability of Cabinet processes</li> <li>3. Leading the civil service through transition</li> </ol>
		<b>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS</b> (Chairperson: TBA)	Role of Cabinets in implementing SDGs, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Relationship to existing national development strategies</li> <li>2. Links to normal Cabinet processes</li> </ol>
	19:00	Dinner	Provided (location to be advised) - optional
<b>Wednesday</b> <b>20 April</b> Morning	09:00	<b>MALAWI CABINET SYSTEM</b>	Rapporteur report on previous day
	09:30		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Briefing by Chief Secretary on Malawi Cabinet system</li> <li>2. Meeting of Cabinet Committee: Constitutional, Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee</li> <li>3. Public Sector Reform in Malawi</li> </ol>
	12:30	Lunch	Provided (Conference Centre)
<b>Wednesday</b> <b>20 April</b> Afternoon	14:30	<b>MINISTERS PANEL</b> (Chairperson: TBA)	Panel of Malawi Ministers to discuss Cabinet issues, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expectation of Cabinet members for Secretariat support</li> <li>2. How to improve quality of Cabinet proposals</li> <li>3. How to develop evidence culture in Cabinet discussions</li> </ol>
	19:00	Dinner	<b>Hosted by ADAM Smith International</b> (Latitude Restaurant)
<b>Thursday</b> <b>21 April</b> Morning	08:30	<b>SITE VISIT</b>	Agriculture project, Salima
	12:30	Lunch	Sunbird Livingstonia Beach Resort

Day	Time	Session	Agenda/details
<b>Thursday 21 April</b> Afternoon	14:00	<b>ANNUAL MEETING</b> (Chairperson: Dr Surrur)	Annual Meeting of Council of African Cabinet Secretaries, (Sunbird Livingstonia Beach Resort): 1. Executive Director's report (activities, administration; financial) 2. Proposed amended Charter 3. Election of President and Vice Presidents 4. ACGN Programme for 2016-2017 Financing ACGN
	19:00	Dinner	Provided (location to be advised) - optional
<b>Friday 22 April</b> Morning		<b>e-CABINET</b> (Chairperson: TBA)	Rapporteur report on previous day 1. Reports from members on e-Cabinet initiatives and plans 2. Different approaches and options 3. Technical support and contractors 4. Challenges 5. Alternative implementation strategies
	12:00	Lunch	Provided (Conference Centre)
<b>Friday 22 April</b> Afternoon		<b>CONCLUSION</b> (Chairperson: ACGN President)	1. Completion of Annual Meeting 2. Reflections and feedback 3. Action plans and next Roundtable 4. Closing ceremony
	19:00	Informal Dinner	Provided (location to be advised) - optional
<b>Saturday 23 April</b>	Various	<b>DEPARTURE</b>	Delegates depart Lilongwe

### **Annex Three: Revised ACGN Comparative Matrix**

[illegible]



[illegible]

Africa Cabinet Government Network Cabinet Secretariats – comparative matrix		Botswana	Ghana	Liberia	Lesotho	Malawi	Rwanda	S. Leone	Somalia	Somaliland	S. Sudan	Tanzania	Uganda	Zambia	Zanzibar
49	Secretariat provides guidance for presenters of agenda items	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
50	Secretariat briefs Committee chairs on content of memoranda <sup>iv</sup>		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
51	Secretariat briefs Cabinet Chairperson on content of memoranda	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
52	How many Cabinet memoranda are received in an average week?	8	3	3-5	6-10	8	8	3	8		8	2	8	5	
During Cabinet															
53	Secretariat takes minutes of Cabinet	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
54	Issues sometimes raised and discussed at Cabinet without memos	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
55	Deputy Ministers attend Cabinet in absence of Ministers	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
56	Cabinet agendas include oral updates on status of decisions		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
57	Policy memoranda are approved before draft bills submitted	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
58	How many times per month does Cabinet meet on average?	4	2	2-4	2	4	2	2	4	4	6	2	4	2	2
59	How many items will typically be on the Cabinet agenda?	20	11	3-5	10-12	5	10-15	15	5	6	4	4	6	7	10-15
60	How many hours do Cabinet meetings typically last?	4	5	3	5-7	5	3	7	4	3	3	2	4	2	
After Cabinet															
61	Mechanism in place to track implementation of Cabinet decisions	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
62	Secretariat tracks implementation of most Cabinet decisions	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
63	Mechanism exists for public communication of Cabinet decisions	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
64	Cabinet resolutions are promptly published in official gazette <sup>v</sup>		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
65	Media briefing occurs after Cabinet meetings <sup>vi</sup>		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

<sup>i</sup> In Uganda this is done by Policy Analysis Units in Ministries

<sup>ii</sup> In Rwanda, Government Retreats involve Ministers, Ministers of State, Permanent Secretaries, other senior government officials and some development partners.

<sup>iii</sup> In Rwanda, the Government Action Coordination Unit within the Cabinet Secretariat is responsible for M&E.

<sup>iv</sup> In South Sudan this briefing is done orally.

<sup>v</sup> In Rwanda, Cabinet resolutions are posted on the Government website.

<sup>vi</sup> In Uganda this media briefing is done on a Thursday after Cabinet meets on a Wednesday and is given by the Minister of Information and National Guidance.

## **Annex Four: Revised ACGN Charter**

## Africa Cabinet Government Network

### CHARTER

#### PURPOSE AND STATUS:

1. The Africa Cabinet Government Network (referred to in this Charter as 'ACGN') is a voluntary organisation of Cabinet Secretariats established for the benefit of members and, through them, the states and peoples they work for.
2. The purpose of the ACGN is to provide formal and informal opportunities for collaboration, mutual support and sharing practical experience, as well as providing technical assistance, to Cabinet Secretaries and others involved in managing Cabinet processes in Africa, in order to facilitate evidence-informed collective decision-making by governments and effective implementation of their decisions.
3. The ACGN shall provide support and advice on government decision-making **processes**. It shall not provide advice or support on the **content** of government policies or other decisions, unless requested by the government concerned.
4. The ACGN is registered in Sierra Leone as an International Non-Government Organisation under the laws of Sierra Leone. It is headquartered in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

#### DEFINITIONS

5. For the purposes of this Charter, 'Cabinet' refers to the supreme collective decision-making body within an executive government, usually comprising Ministers and usually chaired by the Head of Government. In some cases it is called a 'Council of Ministers'. It does not include parliamentary bodies which are elected and are directly accountable to electorates.
6. A 'Cabinet Secretariat' is the organisation within the executive branch of government with responsibility for supporting the operation of the Cabinet, including arranging meetings, regulating and processing the submission of policy proposals, recording and circulating the decisions made by Cabinet and usually compiling reports on the implementation of Cabinet decisions. Some Cabinet Secretariats are separate Ministries (for example a Ministry of Cabinet Affairs), while some others are part of the Office of the President or the Office of the Prime Minister.
7. 'Cabinet Secretaries' are the principal officials responsible for managing the support for the Cabinet and supervising the Cabinet Secretariat. These are often senior Civil Servants, but may also be Ministers or political appointees. For ACGN purposes the criterion is based on their function rather than their employment status. Some Cabinet Secretaries are also heads of their civil service, while in other jurisdictions this is a separate function and position.
8. In the event of a dispute about which position in a jurisdiction is effectively the Cabinet Secretary for the purposes of participation in ACGN (for example where the support for Cabinet processes is embedded in the Office of the President or the Prime Minister), the Executive Committee may seek advice from the head of the Government or his or her most senior official.
9. 'Council' shall refer to the Council of African Cabinet Secretaries' established by Article 18 of this Charter.

10. 'Executive Committee' refers to the committee established by Article 23.
11. 'Executive Director' refers to the position established by Article 25, including any person who acts in that position from time to time by approval of the Executive Committee.

## **MEMBERSHIP OF ACGN**

12. Membership shall be open to all African Cabinet Secretariats who wish to join and agree to comply with this Charter. There is no limit to the number of members.
13. A Secretariat may request membership of the ACGN by letter or email addressed to the Executive Director.
14. Membership is subject to agreement to comply with this Charter including payment of the annual membership fee in accordance with Article 34.
15. Membership of the ACGN by a Cabinet Secretariat does not imply that the Council, the ACGN or any of its members recognise or endorse the sovereignty or political leadership of the government which the member Secretariat serves. ACGN is a network of organisations, not an organisation of nation states, and its purpose is described in Article 2. Any use of terms or symbols of organisations or other entities does not imply any endorsement of their policies or roles.
16. The Council may, if it so resolves, declare a member Secretariat 'inactive' if they have failed to participate in any ACGN activities for more than 2 years or whose membership fees or other liabilities to ACGN are in arrears for more than 2 years. Inactive members may be excluded from specific ACGN activities if the Executive Committee so decides.
17. The Council may, if it so resolves, expel a member Secretariat for failure to comply with the Charter, following a warning and reasonable opportunity to remedy any ongoing failure to comply. Expulsion and any subsequent decision to readmit must be approved by an absolute majority vote of all members excluding inactive members.

## **STRUCTURE**

18. The ACGN shall be governed by the Council of African Cabinet Secretaries (referred to in this Charter as 'the Council').
19. The Council shall determine the policies of the ACGN, subject to this Charter, and approve major projects, activities and priorities.
20. The Council will comprise the Cabinet Secretaries or their delegates from the Secretariats that are members of the ACGN, in accordance with this Charter.
21. The Council shall elect a President and regional Vice Presidents, who will retain those positions for a period specified by the Council, but not more than two years without re-election. These office holders must be members of the Council. There will be a Vice President for each region (East, Southern, West, North and Central Africa) from which there are at least two member Cabinet Secretariats in the ACGN.

22. The President and Vice Presidents are elective positions. In the event that the President or a Vice President ceases to be a Cabinet Secretary, their position shall be filled by election at the next meeting of the Council for the remainder of their original term. In the interim the outgoing member or another representative of that Secretariat may act in the position with the agreement of the other members of the Executive Committee.
23. The Executive Committee shall comprise the President and Vice Presidents or their delegates and shall decide matters consistent with this Charter and resolutions of the Council.
24. The Council may also appoint a Technical Committee comprising staff of Cabinet Secretariats, advisers or others to provide technical support if required.
25. The Executive Committee shall appoint an Executive Director who reports to the Executive Committee and is responsible for day-to-day management of the ACGN and coordination of ACGN support staff. The Executive Director will be the Secretary to the Executive Committee.
26. The Executive Committee may approve the employment of other staff based on terms and conditions approved by the Executive Committee consistent with any resolutions of the Council regarding staffing and budgets.
27. From time to time the Council may appoint firms or other organisations as agents to assist the ACGN to manage specific projects or activities, including (but not limited to) contracting with donors, employing staff and managing funds on behalf of the ACGN. Agreements with agents entered into prior to the establishment of this Charter will continue until completed.

#### **COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP**

28. Membership of the Council shall comprise Cabinet Secretaries or equivalent from African countries.
29. If a member of the Council ceases to hold the office of Cabinet Secretary or equivalent, he or she ceases to be a member of the Council (but may be appointed an Associate Member of the ACGN in accordance with Article 18).
30. Membership of the Council is limited to the individuals holding the post of Cabinet Secretary. The ACGN shall not impose any criteria regarding the system of government or decisions or actions a government may have taken. The only grounds for refusing or terminating membership are serious criminal conviction or explicit UN sanctions affecting the individual.

#### **ASSOCIATE MEMBERS OF THE ACGN**

31. Other individuals may be appointed as Associate Members, for example former Cabinet Secretaries, individual staff of Cabinet secretariats, advisers who work directly with Cabinet Secretaries, and representatives of organisations or firms who support development of Cabinet processes.
32. Associate Members shall be approved by the Executive Committee subject to any relevant resolutions of the Council regarding criteria.

## **FINANCES**

33. Subject to this Charter, the sources of funding for the ACGN's costs and activities may include member contributions, charges or fees for participation in ACGN activities, donations from governments, and donations or other support from international organisations and other donors.
34. As agreed at the Council meeting in April 2015, member Secretariats shall pay a fee for membership of the ACGN, equal to USD10,000 per calendar year for each Secretariat or such other amount as the Council may from time to time determine.
35. The membership fee will commence in 2016 and be payable by 31 March each year unless the Executive Committee agrees to delayed payment or payment by instalments for a specific member Secretariat. The Executive Committee shall notify all Council members of any such agreement within 90 days.
36. Member Secretariats whose membership fees are in arrears without permission of the Executive Committee for delayed or instalment payments may not participate in member-only activities except with the agreement of the Executive Committee. Such non-financial members shall not be eligible for member discounts for ACGN activities where such discounts are available.
37. In addition to the membership fees, the Executive Committee may request members or their governments to make voluntary contributions to the ACGN or to specific activities. These contributions may be financial or in other forms (such as allocating office accommodation, equipment or staff members to provide part time support for ACGN activities).
38. The Council may agree to membership charges for specified categories of associate members.
39. The Executive Committee shall seek support from donors for specific projects or for general costs. Any proposed agreement with donors shall be consistent with the purposes of the ACGN and this Charter and shall be endorsed by the Council.
40. No salaries or fees shall be paid by the ACGN to Council Members, although they may be reimbursed for expenses incurred on behalf of the ACGN.
41. ACGN will engage an accountant to assist with preparation of financial records and reports. An auditor will also be engaged by the Executive Committee and approved at the next meeting of the Council.
42. The Executive Director shall provide an audited financial report annually (calendar year) to the Executive Committee which shall arrange for it to be sent to all Council members for approval at the next Council meeting. Quarterly financial reports shall be provided to Executive Committee members.

## **DECISION-MAKING**

43. Unless otherwise stated in this Charter, all decisions of the Council and the Executive Committee shall be made by a simple majority of votes cast, with each Cabinet secretariat having one vote. Where there is more than one member from a secretariat, they shall have only one vote between them. In the event of a tie, the President shall have a casting vote.
44. Decisions may be taken at meetings or by email.



45. A minimum of 14 days notice shall be given for meetings and also 14 days provided to members for votes by email.
46. Emails sent to the last notified email address shall be deemed to have been received. Failure to receive a response to the nominated ACGN email address by the specified deadline (of no less than 14 days) will be regarded as refusal to vote or a 'no objection' (depending on the resolution).
47. Members may nominate proxies to vote on their behalf based on any procedures agreed by the Executive Committee.
48. Meetings of the Council shall be convened, as required, by the President at least once each year, with necessary decisions between meetings taken by email. Meetings of the Executive Committee shall be convened as required, at least quarterly, where necessary by telephone conference or Skype.
49. The quorum for Council and Executive Committee decisions shall be at least 50% of members.
50. The Executive Committee shall have the authority to determine further detailed decision-making rules and regulations consistent with this Charter.

#### **ACGN ACTIVITIES**

51. The ACGN shall engage in activities consistent with this Charter, which may be open to all member secretariats or only some secretariats, depending on the interest and needs of individual secretariats and the availability of funding.
52. The Executive Committee may decide to conduct activities open to non-member Secretariats or their staff, with or without discounted fees or charges for members.
53. Specific activities shall be approved by the Executive Committee, consistent with any work plan, priorities or other resolutions of the Council.
54. Member organisations, their representatives, ACGN employees and associates shall not use ACGN meetings, activities, publications or other communications to promote specific political views, specific policies (including foreign policies) or other causes. This exclusion does not cover discussion of decision-making processes or the use of case studies for training or discussion purposes.
55. Member Secretariats shall take reasonable steps to ensure that, where their representatives participate in ACGN activities (such as training workshops), they comply with the laws of the host country, respect local cultures and treat other participants with courtesy and respect.

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

56. From time-to-time Council Members may share sensitive information or documents with other members or associate members on a confidential basis. It is entirely up to each Cabinet Secretary to decide what information will be shared, consistent with the secrecy provisions of his or her own Cabinet, and shall clearly specify to the ACGN secretariat the basis on which it is being shared.

57. All members agree to respect the confidentiality of information or documents and not to provide access to others without the expressed permission of the Cabinet Secretary concerned.

#### **PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND ADVICE**

58. The ACGN shall not make any public criticism or comment on any decision of a government whose Cabinet Secretary is a member of the Council. No person shall make public criticism or comment on any government in the name of or on behalf of the ACGN or the Council.
59. All public material will be limited to advice and guidance on Cabinet processes or activities of the ACGN.
60. In the event that a government requests advice on the content of a specific policy under Article 3, any such advice provided by member personnel, an employee or an associate on behalf of ACGN on the content of policies or options shall be confidential. ACGN shall not make public statements regarding the content of specific policies.
61. Consistent with any policies or criteria decided by the Council and the Executive Committee, information and documents published (eg on the ACGN website or in newsletters) shall be consistent with the purpose of the ACGN. Published information or documents shall not purport to represent the views of the Council or its members unless previously agreed by the Council.

#### **CORRESPONDENCE**

62. Notifications and communications with ACGN and Council members shall be by email to the last notified address. Members are required to notify the Executive Director of any changes in Council member or Secretariat contact details, including phone numbers, email addresses and details of nominated liaison persons.

#### **ESTABLISHMENT AND AMENDMENT**

63. This amended Charter was approved by a meeting of Cabinet Secretaries and their representatives on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2016.
64. This charter may be amended by a resolution of the Council, provided that prior notification of the specific amendment is circulated with at least 14 days notice.