

## **INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS ON CONFERENCE THEMES**

Prof. Martin Segger, University of Victoria, Acting President and Conference Chair

### ***Delegates in attendance:***

*Tamika Boatswain, National Museum of Guyana, Georgetown, Guyana*  
*Shebana Daniels: Walter Roth Museum, Georgetown, Guyana*  
*Mohamed Khan, Cultural Anthropologist, Georgetown, Guyana*  
*Anthony Joseph, Military Reference Museum, Guyana Defence Force, Guyana*  
*Marco Antonio Olcha, Instituto de Ecologia/Sietematica, Cuba*  
*Elfrieda Bissember, National Gallery of Art, Georgetown, Guyana*  
*Gargi Roy, Environmental Protection Agency, Georgetown, Guyana*  
*Jenny Daly, Museum of African Heritage, Georgetown, Guyana*  
*June Dubessette, National Archives Guyana, Georgetown, Guyana*  
*Nadia Gamel-Carter, National Archives Guyana, Georgetown, Guyana*  
*Maureen Paul, Tourism and Hospitality Association of Guyana, Georgetown, Guyana*  
*Lloyd Kandasammy, National Trust, Georgetown, Guyana*  
*Nirvana Persaud, National Trust, Georgetown, Guyana*  
*Mark Graham, Museum of Nature, Ottawa, Canada*  
*Richard Benjamin, Slavery Museum, Liverpool, England*  
*Michael Jessamy, Ministry of Tourism, St. George's, Grenada*  
*Freda Nkirote, National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya*  
*Christine Ngereza, National Museums of Tanzania, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania*  
*Michael Gondwe, Museums of Malawi, Blantyre, Malawi*  
*Catherine Cole, Catherine C. Cole and Associates, Edmonton, Canada*  
*Luvuyo Dondolo, Amatole District Municipality, East London, South Africa*  
*Yakhub Tiamiyu, National Museum, Lagos, Nigeria*  
*Martin Segger, CAM, Victoria, Canada*  
*Barbara Winters, CAM, Victoria, Canada*

*The following international delegates arrived later on April 18th*

*Terry Nyambe, Livingston Museum, Livingston, Zambia*  
*Hazel Brookes, heritage consultant, St. Kitts and Nevis*  
*Lucina Shayo, National Museums of Tanzania, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania*

### **Chair: Martin Segger, Interim President of CAM**

Welcome to the conference. Lois Irvine, secretary general of CAM sends her heartfelt greetings and her regrets for not being able to attend this conference. She hopes that the conference will move smoothly and to good effect, like the CAM conferences that she has organized in the past. Lois plays a key role in the CAM network, which has become more electronic in the past year. A CAM website has been established on the University of Victoria server, and is populated with relevant information for members and those interested in CAM's activities.

CAM is a civil society organization, connected to the Commonwealth Foundation, from which it receives support. The Commonwealth Foundation is one of two branches of the Commonwealth association. The Commonwealth Secretariat is the intergovernmental agency of the Commonwealth, and organizes meetings of the heads of states. The Commonwealth Foundation is supported by member states, and it funds the good works of the Commonwealth, including civil society organizations. The Commonwealth Foundation promotes change in society at all levels, which can take root if people themselves change in order to make living together easier. The Foundation encourages change through associations of heads of states, profession associations, and other numerous agencies that are all listed on its website. CAM is one of the more active organizations. It meets on a regular basis, assumes an agenda to actively pursue, and promotes and educates about the values that underpin the Commonwealth. Member agencies such as CAM have two roles: to meet, discuss and bring issues forward, and to communicate those issues to the heads of state of the Commonwealth when they meet once a year. Through such networks, the members of the Commonwealth agree on initiatives to be undertaken. The current activities of the Commonwealth Foundation and the Secretariat focuses on three core programmes:

1) Governance and Democracy. These values of good governance and participatory democracy are promoted by various means through its agencies, as discussed by Dr. Rex Nettleford in his keynote address.

2) Sustainable Development. This is an emerging global issue. The awareness of ecological destruction through economic activities is gaining a higher level of prominence in programmes and agendas.

3) Culture and Diversity. The Commonwealth Foundation seeks to promote and support respect for cultural diversity throughout the Commonwealth. This includes the role of faith communities, including the promotion of peace. The culture and diversity programme goals are linked closely with the pillars of the other two programmes.

In all three programmes, there are two major concerns: access to education to encourage citizens to participate in economic and civil society; and gender equality, the role of women and their access to education and a democratic system of government.

This brings us to the themes of the conference. Commonwealth member agencies adopt the agenda that the Secretariat and the Foundation establish. Our conference themes in Session 1, Museums in Pluralistic Societies, and Session 2, World Watch One: Biodiversity and Conservation, are intertwined and relate directly to the current agenda.

CAM holds a unique niche in the international museum movement. Our discussions feed back to the Foundation. CAM is an established network of trust and cooperation of individuals, of institutions, and of members of civil societies. The networks of trust engage at the level of shared values, and members meet at the individual level.

Questions and Comments:

Michael Jessamy: Museums are loosing their importance in the Caribbean and they are loosing personnel. Archives and museums are in a deplorable state. Leaders need to be bombarded to bring attention to this issue. They need to know the important role of

museums in education. There should be a note at the end of the conference to the Commonwealth Foundation to raise a red flag that this issue needs attention.

Mark Graham: CAM could produce a declaration similar to the Declaration on Biodiversity.

Lloyd Kandasammy: There is a shortage of expertise. We need to keep networking and to stay in touch at the end of the conference. We can share projects and experiences, perhaps through the website.

Freda Nkirote: Most museums are regarded through the ICOM definition of museums. The definition should change to museums as agents of civil society. We need to look at museums in a different way.

Alfrieda Bissember: I agree with Michael's remarks. The Caribbean is losing its bright people. It is difficult to operate in post-colonial societies with social problems. We do not have a young generation to fill those roles. The governments may have good intentions, but there is little practical support. Culture is under attack.

Michael Gondwe: These issues are not new in the long history of CAM. They have been debated in great detail. CAM supports poor countries on the whole. There is the problem of lack of resources. The challenge is to put into place aggressive people who make change, such as Mandela himself, a patron of this organization.

Martin Segger: Yes, the issues are not new, but we need to continue to address them. There are two practical ways: 1) At the end of the conference, craft resolutions based on the themes of the meeting; the concerns expressed; and practical steps to address them through CAM and the Commonwealth Foundation. A previous example is the Bridgetown Declaration. Catherine Cole and Michael Gondwe are elected to bring back to the table at the end of the conference a declaration to be discussed by the delegates. It should set the direction for CAM; 2) address the issues through professional training. The CAM course is international and is administered by Lois Irvine. It needs to be updated. There will be a session on the CAM course on Monday at 3:30. A new training programme could address the needs and issues you face. We can discuss how a course can help in CAM institutions. Join CAM; play a role.

Session adjourned.