

ii. Understanding sea-level rise: its causes and effects

The Commonwealth has a long history of commitment to addressing climate change and supporting member countries in dealing with its adverse impacts. The Commonwealth Expert Group on Climatic Change and Sea Level Rise was appointed in 1987 to consider the implications of sea level rise for island and low lying countries. They catalogued the effects of sea-level rise as: reduced island size and shore length, decreased fresh water capacity, less available land for food production, greater exposure to salination and penetration of storm surges, more extensive food shortages, greater risk of malnutrition and environmental health problems, the movement of settlements from coastlines including in-country migration from low to high islands and urban centres, and increased migration to continental countries.

The Work of the Commonwealth Expert Group took place against a backdrop of several parallel scientific evaluations, conferences and debates with environmental themes. Its seminal Report, Climate Change: Meeting the Challenge: Report by a Commonwealth Group of Experts reignited discussion around the fact that was not the purview of single states, but a unifying and comprehensive theme to be considered in the determination of national

At their 2018 Meeting, Commonwealth Heads noted the close linkages between the ocean, wellbeing and prosperity of the people of the Commonwealth. They identified climate change, including sea level rise and acidification, biodiversity loss, overfishing, and plastic pollution as some of the most significant pressures on the ocean, and again called for ambitious, coordinated global action to address the deteriorating health of the world's oceans which impacts every country.

iii. Observed and projected environmental, social and economic impacts and resulting challenges relating to sea-level rise

The 1989 Climate Change Report noted the existence of reasonable agreement about global average increases, yet found far less agreement about what these could mean for the climate of particular regions, let alone individual countries. Although the current state of science did not enable predictions of future temperature and precipitation to be made at that scale with any confidence, some countries would, however experience changes significantly greater than the global average.

Several key findings have been borne out in the intervening years since the Report. Its contention that given the projected impact of rising sea levels on vulnerable countries, poorer countries and poorer groups within countries have less capacity to adjust to greater climate variability and the costs of more extreme climate change, remains largely uncontroverted today.

The 2007 Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment in Nairobi exain