

# A Connected Commonwealth

Commonwealth Day | 11 March 2019

## Commonwealth Day Message by The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC, Commonwealth Secretary-General

At this time when multilateralism is under threat, and we see nationalism and narrow self-interest on the rise, the Commonwealth shines as a beacon of hope and promise, inspiring confidence in the benefits of international co-operation and collective action. An understanding of how as countries, as communities and as individuals we are mutually dependent and mutually supporting lies at the heart of all that the Commonwealth brings to our world.

In 1949 our founding eight nations came together to declare that they would “remain united as free and equal members of the Commonwealth of Nations, freely co-operating in the pursuit of peace, liberty and progress”. In the seventy years since that London Declaration, which brought into being the Commonwealth we know today, many more nations have grown to maturity.

As independence has been achieved and celebrated, awareness of our interdependence has also grown, and it is by recognising and building on this that we continue to flourish and develop as ‘A Connected Commonwealth’.

Our fifty-three nations – large and small, rich and poor – are now home to one third of all humanity, 60% of whom are under the age of thirty. We are drawn together by common values, and co-operate to promote democracy, good governance, the rule of law and human rights.

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We work to protect the social and economic wellbeing of our people, especially to empower women and marginalised or vulnerable communities. We create opportunities for greater fulfilment by all, particularly our young people. Together, we take action to safeguard and regenerate the natural resources of this planet – our common earth.

It is most fitting that as a family of nations we mark seven decades of remarkable social and economic development in 2019, the year following the hosting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting by the United Kingdom, our oldest member country, and the year before it is hosted by Rwanda, our newest. Such dynamism and inclusiveness add to the rich and continuing narrative of Commonwealth connection.

This is manifested in the Commonwealth Blue Charter, through which our member countries collaborate on protocols and practices to safeguard the health of the ocean which connects the continents, the islands and the countries in which we live. It is also seen in the Commonwealth Cyber Declaration, which supports economic and social development and rights online so that a free, open, inclusive and secure cyberspace can be enjoyed by all.

These important affirmations of Commonwealth solidarity and co-operation are among agreements reached when the leaders of our richly diverse and geographically widespread countries came together last year. They are inspiring examples of how in the Commonwealth we work individually and collectively to promote economic growth and sustainable development in which all can share.

From its earliest beginnings, and through successive stages of expansion and development, the Commonwealth has been a pioneer of invention and innovation, with diversity and inclusiveness as watchwords. So as we look forward and plan for further decades of more broadly based prosperity and opportunity – particularly over the next decade towards the 2030 target date for the Sustainable Development Goals – let us renew our commitment to making contributions that are local as well as global, individual as well as communal, by drawing on and adding to the power, potential and influence of 'A Connected Commonwealth'.