



Issue 1: October/November 2020

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Welcome to the first issue of the Small States e-Bulletin, our new bimonthly newsletter which provides a focus on the Commonwealth's work on Small States across our 54 member countries.

I am proud of the incredible work the Secretariat has undertaken in both responding to the Covid-19 pandemic over the last nine months, but also because of what my colleagues have continued to accomplish despite the

crisis. From the launch of the Commonwealth Says NO MORE digital portal to help tackle violence against women - which has increased during lockdowns - to our Mauritius oil spill rapid response team, we have been actively engaging with Small States and beyond during the ongoing and inter-connected crises the world faces.

As we continue to work together to protect our 2.4 billion citizens, the

Secretariat's role in driving prosperity, democracy and peace has never been more critical - and we look forward to sharing our successes with you over the coming months. I hope you are as inspired as I am by our ability to accelerate collaboration and innovation, in order to create a better, safer future for everyone.

Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland QC

KEY DATES

- Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting, Oct 14-16
- World Bank and IMF annual meetings, Oct 12-16
- Commonwealth Action Series on Youth development, Oct 15
- UN LDC5 event, Oct 21
- Elections at 40 webinar, Oct 21

COVID-19

- Lockdown measures have significantly impacted the USD\$8.8 trillion global tourism industry. With small states relying so heavily on tourism, the Secretariat hosted a webinar series on the [economics of COVID-19](#) to explore lessons and opportunities for member countries.
- COVID-19 is also affecting the world's justice systems. Join [webinars](#) with experts from across the Commonwealth, as they discuss how to protect the rule of law amidst the pandemic.
- As part of the Secretariat's work to assist member countries in combating COVID-19, live data is available on the [Commonwealth Coronavirus Response Centre](#).

Gender

The Secretariat and the NO MORE Foundation launched [CommonwealthSaysNOMORE.org](#) on 9 September, to support member countries in tackling violence against women and girls. Domestic and sexual violence was an epidemic before COVID-19, but lockdowns and economic pressures are escalating the problem. The pan-Commonwealth portal provides resources for governments and

UN General Assembly

The Secretariat joined numerous side events during the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly, which took place 22-29 September. As well as hosting virtual consultations on shaping a toolkit to help member countries meet UN-agreed [gender equality targets](#) by 2030, [Secretary-General Patricia Scotland QC joined UN Women](#) to discuss gender discrimination in nationality laws -

organisations to establish campaigns and help those at risk. Please support [the campaign](#) online by using [#CommonwealthSaysNOMORE](#).

an issue which is further exacerbating inequality during the pandemic.

Climate change

- This week the Commonwealth [Disaster Risk Finance portal](#) was launched. The portal is a repository of information on a range of finance instruments available to help member countries manage the financial impact of natural disasters. Later the scope will be expanded to include financing for all forms of disasters.
- The Commonwealth Secretariat Vulnerability Index will be delivered in December 2020. It will provide the basis for countries to argue for the introduction of a vulnerability index in the financing criteria of international financial institutions.
- A project with a leading university to help build youth leaders across the Commonwealth and assist small island developing states on areas such as climate change will be announced in the coming weeks.

Election Observation

- Following the snap Guyana elections, Secretary-General Patricia Scotland QC [welcomed](#) the call on all stakeholders to respect the ruling of the Caribbean Court of Justice, stating: “The Commonwealth calls all leaders to be faithful to the common good, so that Guyana’s future may truly be forged today.”
- The Secretariat has observed electoral processes for over four decades. In that time, more than 160 elections have been observed in nearly 40 countries. We're commemorating 40 years of election observation through online events reflecting on how the methodology and community have evolved, as well as future challenges and opportunities. [Celebrate with us by joining our webinar series.](#)
- Building, supporting and strengthening legal systems and good governance in member countries is a key aim of the Secretariat through the Promoting Democracy programme. [Learn more.](#)

Mauritius oil spill

The oil spill on the richly biodiverse Indian Ocean island of Mauritius last month is continuing to cause substantial environmental damage. It is also exacerbating the economic stress of some 1.3 million people who rely on a tourism industry already impacted by COVID-19.

Responding to the call from Prime Minister Pravin Jugnauth, the Secretariat assembled a rapid response team and co-ordinated on the ground efforts alongside the Indian Government and other organisations. As well as developing an immediate, mid and long-term strategy to deal with the disaster, the team is continuing to provide technical input to Mauritius during this challenging time.

The Secretariat is currently creating a Virtual Centre and Rapid Response Protocol platform to assist governments with practical natural disaster response via open-source tools and resources, which we look forward to sharing with you.

[Explore our Environment work](#)



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