



The Commonwealth

28 May 2017

Horasis - the Global Vision Community, Annual Global Meeting on theme
'Building Togetherness'

Remarks by the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, The Rt Hon Patricia
Scotland QC.

**Secretary-General's topic: Diversity and commonality: The Commonwealth and
global paths towards peace-building, stability, resilience, and sustainability,
through shared values and mutual support**

It is a great honour to be addressing you today, and to do so as Secretary-General
of the Commonwealth.

More than fifty sovereign countries, in every continent and ocean, work together
as the Commonwealth.

Together we number almost 2.5 billion people.

This means that a third of the world's population are Commonwealth citizens - of
whom 60% are under the age of 30.

These young people are growing up and setting out on their careers at a time when
we face some very daunting and interrelated global challenges - which
disproportionately affect people living on the margins or in disadvantaged
communities.

The Commonwealth is particularly well-configured to tackle these challenges, to
draw together the wisdom and experience that can lead to solutions, and to offer
hope.

We work towards a more sustainable global future, that is mutually respectful,
resilient, peaceful and prosperous, and that cherishes equality of opportunity and
inclusiveness.



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We build in positive ways on what is good in our shared traditions and heritage, and on our common aspirations for a safer and fairer future for all.

The Common Law, shared language, and similar systems of governance, administration, and regulation, give us a truly remarkable advantage when we work together.

The immense good that is achieved through cooperation between governments, ministerial meetings, and official dialogue, is immeasurably enhanced by the vigour and dedication of Commonwealth civil society organisations, professional bodies, and other groups.

These networks bring together and allow for cooperation between an amazingly diverse yet closely interrelated constellation of people, institutions, communities and nations.

The Commonwealth Charter expresses our aspirations - which also serve as our inspiration.

The articles of the Commonwealth Charter, adopted by our Heads of Government in 2012, prefigure the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development agreed in 2015.

The sixteen articles of our Charter, with the addition of that overarching Commonwealth principle of partnership which we therefore include in our preamble, match almost precisely the seventeen sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda.

Among them, respect for human dignity is paramount, which is why I have set 'Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls' as a Commonwealth priority

Domestic violence affects one in three women worldwide, and is the greatest cause of morbidity in women and girls.



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I also want to make sure that we take decisive action to draw on that huge pool of female talent now available within the Commonwealth and beyond.

Advancing women's political participation, leadership, and economic empowerment are critical building blocks for achieving the SDGs.

Another Commonwealth priority is Youth.

We recently launched the 2016 Report of our Commonwealth Global Youth Development Index.

This project continues our long established Commonwealth record of pioneering practical action on youth development.

The more skilled young people are, and the more they are involved in planning and working for the future of our societies at every level, the more opportunities and freedom they will have to fulfil their aspirations and talents.

On taking office I said that I wanted to put the 'wealth' back into the 'Commonwealth', and the 'common' back into 'wealth'.

Even though not a formal trading bloc, Commonwealth offers unrivalled networks through which to expand trade and investment among our member states.

Commonwealth Secretariat research and analysis shows that when both bilateral partners are Commonwealth members they tend to trade 20% more, and generate 10% more foreign direct investment inflows than would otherwise be the case.

This potent Commonwealth effect implies bilateral trade costs between Commonwealth partners are on average 19% lower compared with those for other country pairs.



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It is good business sense to make the most of this unique asset for the greater good of all our citizens.

Trade among Commonwealth countries has risen from about \$200 billion in the year 2000 to more than \$600 billion today. By 2020, we estimate it will be worth \$1 trillion.

So the economic links between our nations are growing, some would say exponentially.

This offers huge opportunity over coming years to make even more of Commonwealth trade advantage, and to extend it from 19% to perhaps 30% or beyond.

To do so we will need to enhance and share best commercial and regulatory practice within similar statutory frameworks across the Commonwealth so that we make it even easier and better for Commonwealth members to trade one with the other.

Fraud and corruption potentially destroy 'Commonwealth Advantage' - and the benefits of having similar institutions.

We are able to build on our innate sense of kinship and affinity, and the Common Law to leverage real change in the Commonwealth.

Furthermore, the Common Law is the basis on which international law is predicated.

That is why, for example, our Commonwealth conference a year ago on 'Tackling Corruption Together' attracted such an unprecedented level of participation and interest from around the world.

It brought together government and business leaders, civil society organisations



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and the private sector, to agree on practical steps towards creating a global coalition of goodwill and good practice to bolster transparency and good governance.

The impact of climate change has been high on our Commonwealth agenda for thirty years.

In the past year I have convened two Commonwealth meetings on 'Regenerative Development to Reverse Climate Change', bringing together visionaries, scientists, and other experts.

They considered the existential threat posed to many of our communities - and in some cases entire countries - by destructive impact of anthropogenic climate change on the delicate balance of life on this planet.

New approaches such as biomimicry, carbon-eating concrete, cooling systems based on termite mounds, permaculture, circular and symbiotic economics - made possible by science, technology and changed attitudes - now offer the possibility to reverse that damage.

The Commonwealth, can offer leadership in adopting and implementing those new technologies - particularly with Fiji, a Commonwealth member, chairing COP 23 in November.

The changing nature of violence in our world is alarming, and it affects us all.

Our focus this year is on 'A Peace-building Commonwealth'.

Building peace requires patience, perseverance, and determination to work for the common good in a spirit of respect and understanding.

These are all Commonwealth strengths.



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Our recently established Commonwealth Countering Violent Extremism Unit supports member states with devising and implementing national strategies for preventing radicalisation, and for strengthening national human rights institutions and the rule of law.

The Commonwealth way is always to encourage positive engagement, by promoting alternative narratives, strengthening justice institutions, and building platforms for dialogue.

We also need to mobilise faith leaders alongside those of no religious belief, to unite in upholding and expressing the values of our common humanity.

Globally, regionally and nationally, we see political, social and economic change occurring at a very rapid pace.

By offering support to strengthen and stabilise national institutions, and by providing targeted and practical assistance to help all member states to reach the objectives they set themselves, the Commonwealth can be a steadying anchor in these turbulent times.

So that we can capitalise on the factors that combine to give us our Commonwealth Advantage, I am setting up a Commonwealth Office of Criminal and Civil Justice Reform.

It will share templates for legislative reform and implementation of best practice to strengthen public safety, and help show what has or has not worked in our Commonwealth jurisdictions.

Each of our jurisdictions is different, and has specific local needs and context, yet all share many similarities, and deep connection between our people and the institutions which serve them.

As a proud daughter of the Caribbean, I take as one of my guiding texts the words



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of Sir Arthur Lewis from St Lucia, the great economist and Nobel laureate, who said: ‘The fundamental cure for poverty is not money but knowledge’.

What the Commonwealth does, and what we are doing here at this Horasis gathering, adds to the rich tinctures of that cure.