
Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting

Marlborough House, London, 10 July 2019

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Agenda Item 5: Commonwealth 70th Celebration

Affirmation by Foreign Ministers of the Commonwealth on its 70th Anniversary

Seventy years ago, the Heads of Government of Commonwealth nations made a bold and far-sighted commitment to an innovative vision for what could be achieved through international connection and collaboration building on the values of continuing development, democracy and the rule of law. They declared that, as free and equal members of the Commonwealth of Nations, the countries they represented would remain partners, freely co-operating in the pursuit of peace, liberty and progress.

The Commonwealth of Nations then comprised eight members; it now encompasses fifty-three countries: over a quarter of the membership of the United Nations, and nearly a third of the population of the world. Through seven decades of economic growth and social and political development, many more nations are realising their potential. The Commonwealth has a proud history of acting to strengthen good governance and the rule of law, to protect and promote democratic principles and human rights, to promote peace and security and to strengthen democratic institutions. As they have done so, deeper understanding of our interdependence has also grown, and of the value of mutual support and encouragement towards upholding, and making progress based upon, the shared values and principles which are now brought together in the Commonwealth Charter.

The wide geographical spread and rich diversity of culture and endowment represented by our member countries, and by the people who live in them, combine to make the Commonwealth of Nations particularly well positioned to lead by example in seizing the opportunities of the 21st century, and to tackle the increasingly urgent challenges which confront us now or lie ahead. Commonwealth collaboration shines as a beacon for multilateralism.

Our member nations can collectively provide leadership within the wider global community towards bright new horizons of hope in a world that is fairer, more prosperous, more sustainable and more secure. We do so by offering new thinking, by devising innovative approaches and by making contributions to sustainable development, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, inclusive economic growth, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and the health, happiness and harmony of our people, and the protection of democracy, particularly by building peace and security through the reinforcement of the rules-based international order, and respect and understanding that transcends boundaries of cultural, religious or any other identity. We are particularly mindful of the role of the Commonwealth as an advocate for the needs of smaller and more vulnerable states, and for the inclusion of people and communities that are marginalised.

Through her personal example, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II as Head of the Commonwealth, has offered gentle encouragement and been an inspiration to generations of Commonwealth citizens. Her Majesty has shown unwavering faithfulness to the high ideals which enable the Commonwealth to flourish. This will be carried forward when, in the fullness of time and as agreed by our Heads of Government, HRH Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, becomes Head of the Commonwealth.

We - representatives of the Governments of Antigua & Barbuda, Australia, The Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Canada, Cyprus, Dominica, eSwatini, Fiji, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malaysia, Malta, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Samoa, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, South Africa, St Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, St Vincent & The Grenadines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tonga, Trinidad & Tobago, Tuvalu, Uganda, The Gambia, the United Kingdom, the United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu and Zambia, together with the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, reaffirm our dedication to the core values and principles of the Commonwealth as declared in our Charter.

We commit with renewed confidence and determination to work towards deepening the impact that the connected Commonwealth brings to our world. In doing so, we affirm our core principles of consensus and common action, mutual respect, inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, legitimacy, and responsiveness. Working together with common purpose, our determination is to build a better and brighter world for the good of all our people.

London, 10 July 2019