

18 May 2017

**Commonwealth Conference on Regenerative
Development to Reverse Climate Change (RDRCC)
Opening Remarks by the Secretary-General of the
Commonwealth, The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC**

Excellencies, visionaries, Commonwealth colleagues,
friends and allies.

It is an immense pleasure and a real honour to welcome
you to Marlborough House for this second
Commonwealth meeting on Regenerative Development
to Reverse Climate Change.

This is the third meeting on climate change we have
convened since as Secretary-General I took up the
responsibilities entrusted to me by Heads of
Government.

I am conscious that many of you have had to juggle very
tight schedules and other pressing and urgent matters
in order to participate, and I am indeed most grateful.

Your presence shows stalwart solidarity with our Commonwealth agenda on climate change, and is testimony to your concern for the stewardship of our planet, and the welfare and survival of all those with whom we share it – including our fellow human beings.

Multiple scientific sources - including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change - attest to climate change being real, and to the atmosphere of this globe on which we live becoming warmer.

There is also scientific consensus that global warming is linked to human activities that emit greenhouse gases and alter the atmosphere, mainly as a result of unsustainable consumption patterns.

Climate change has potentially detrimental impacts on society, ecosystems, and the entire development agenda - including the realisation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Time and time again in Commonwealth countries - including Dominica, Fiji, Vanuatu and more recently Mozambique - we have seen how climate-related disasters can in minutes undo decades of development gains.

The challenges of famine, migration, and desertification are among the products of climate change that threaten human security and even existence - especially in Africa.

Declining food production may not cope with increasing population growth unless technology and other resources are harnessed wisely.

Some Commonwealth Small Island Developing States face obliteration as a result of rising sea levels, which presents huge cultural and jurisprudential issues.

The magnitude of the threat from climate change, especially for those whose endowment or stage of development renders them more vulnerable and less

resilient, make it incumbent upon us to shift from mere adaptation and mitigation towards approaches capable of transforming climate change into a window of opportunity.

Our Regenerative Development workshop last October drew attention to some of the existing science, technologies, and mechanisms which have the potential to sequester carbon in substantial quantities, and to yield parallel benefits such as boosting food production and providing raw material for our industries.

Regenerative Development offers ways of tackling climate change on a scale and by means that can be adopted by the most vulnerable countries, and are appropriate to the day to day lives and livelihoods of their inhabitants.

These approaches appeal both to developing and to developed countries, and offer attractive and innovative

solutions for commercial investment portfolios as well as for aid donors.

They bring together mechanisms that have multiple benefits, including reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and enabling communities to cope with the impacts of climate change by generating economic benefits while, in the long-run, reversing the impact of anthropogenic climate change.

Many of you will be aware that here at the Commonwealth Secretariat we have a dedicated work stream on climate finance.

Our Climate Finance Access Hub assists countries with building long-term capacity so that they are equipped to access climate funds on a sustainable basis.

I acknowledge with deep appreciation the generous support of the Government of Australia, which is the sole funder of this vitally important Commonwealth

intervention. By the end of June 2017, six vulnerable Commonwealth member countries will have benefitted from the hub.

This climate finance arm at the Secretariat will work collaboratively with our Regenerative Development group to devise and source funding for potential project solutions to the various challenges related to climate change being faced in Commonwealth countries.

Similarly, there be a coordinated approach to the development of toolkits and other knowledge products from both the climate financing and regenerative development streams of the wider Commonwealth.

The value of such knowledge drawn from holistic approaches cannot be overemphasised.

Bringing together visionaries, innovators and inventors with researchers and policy makers is how we can make a real difference.

Our aim for this high level meeting on Regenerative Development to Reverse Climate Change is to achieve the following:

- Create awareness within the Commonwealth of Regenerative Development and its potential;
- Garner political support within the Commonwealth for implementation;
- Influence the public discourse on climate change, to focus on promise as much as on peril; and
- Present a business case for the potential gains from investment in climate vulnerable countries.

We need to spread the word that Regenerative Development can, and will be if we choose to have the political will to work together, a vital factor towards achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

The stature and eminence of participants gathered for this meeting, authorities and representatives from many disciplines in the field of climate change, offers

well-founded hope that as 'A Peace-building Commonwealth' we are ready to move towards liberating the world of tomorrow and all its people from the perils, the uncertainties, the existential threats of climate change.

I would like to give a special thank-you to Mauritius, host of our Climate Finance Access Hub, and to all who have travelled far to be with us. The Commonwealth is a community of 52 countries representing 2.4 billion people – a third of the world's population. If we can come to a consensus, the rest of the world will see themselves in us. So we can be the change we want to see. We did it in Malta and we can do it here today. Thanks to all of you for attending.

--ENDS--