

One Resilient Common Future

Commonwealth Day | 11 March 2024

Commonwealth Day Message from The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland KC, Commonwealth Secretary-General

Commonwealth Day is an occasion of pride and celebration, and a moment for reflection.

On taking office in 2016, I said that we faced some of the most critical challenges that many of us have ever seen.

In the same year, the Commonwealth Women's Forum pronounced that 'alone we are invisible, but together we are invincible'.

The experience of the last eight years has borne that out.

Intensifying global economic challenges, exacerbated by a devastating pandemic and the tremors of conflicts beyond the Commonwealth, are creating a hard reality for Governments and citizens around the world.

And the accelerating impacts of climate change are causing more frequent and devastating disasters, destroying lives and livelihoods, and reversing years of hard-won progress.

These crises interconnect, entwine and worsen one another, combining to amplify existing social, political and economic inequalities, and bring forward the tipping point for instability and conflict.

It is into this crucible that the most profound and far-reaching technological advancement in the history of human civilisation is unfolding.

The reality of the world today – more connected, yet more complex and challenged than ever – insists that we are dependent on each other.

We work together, or we suffer in isolation.

In this context – facing challenges which are so intractable, so interconnected, so consequential, and so far-reaching – our place within the Commonwealth offers us a genuine advantage.

At a time of great strain across the multilateral system, the Commonwealth stands together, taking concrete steps towards the common good in every area.

We helped each other through the pandemic.

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We work together to restore the natural world on land and ocean; to accelerate the transition to clean energy; to protect and empower women and young people; to transform the delivery of healthcare and education; to safeguard democracy, enhance justice, and build peace.

That togetherness not only helps us deliver vital climate finance to our most vulnerable members; it enabled our landmark resolution on Loss and Damage, which helped to pave the way for global progress at COP28.

Over the course of 75 years, our family of nations has grown in scale, strength and experience.

Our inbuilt relationships are unique and extraordinary, drawing together one third of humanity, across five continents and six oceans, with an astonishing diversity of thought, tradition and experience, and 1.5 billion people under the age of 30.

By keeping our Commonwealth connections strong, we can defend our shared values, and advance our shared interests, even in the most turbulent times.

This is not an accident of history. Indeed, it is the consequence of our ability to confound history; bringing independent, sovereign nations together in the modern world with an equal say, united by a special blend of high ideals, common interests, natural advantages, and joint action.

And it is the result of rigorous and determined work to live up to the values and aspirations of our Charter, and our continuous efforts to deliver each of the mandates our Heads of Government have given to us.

In pursuance of these mandates, our proven ability to innovate remains the engine of our collective progress, and the new tools which technology offers us can be powerful allies.

The opportunities we are creating for governments and citizens – especially our young people – to understand, master and harness Artificial Intelligence is just one example.

These opportunities do not only enable economic advancement; they have the capacity to supercharge our response to the climate crisis and transform the delivery of public services across our 56 member states.

I am determined that, in keeping with our long tradition of global leadership, the Commonwealth will become the definitive home for the use of Artificial Intelligence for the public good.

I hold an unshakable belief in the value, power and potential of our Commonwealth family. That belief has only been strengthened by my experience as Secretary-General.

Together, we have built a Commonwealth which is fit for the times we live in: stronger, more connected and more influential than ever; capable of rising to the world's challenges, innovating to seize new opportunities, and working together to shape a more peaceful, resilient and prosperous common future.

On this Commonwealth Day, as we prepare to come together again as one Commonwealth family in Samoa for our Heads of Government Meeting later this year, let us draw again from the wells of friendship and mutual respect, encouraging ourselves and inspiring each other to ever-more more profound depths of co-operation and greater heights of achievement.

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