

Celebrating A Peace-building Commonwealth

Commonwealth Day | 13 March 2017

Commonwealth Day Message by The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC, Commonwealth Secretary-General

This Commonwealth Day, I near the completion of my first year in office as Secretary-General, serving the governments and people of more than fifty Commonwealth member states.

During this time, it has been uplifting to see – in a remarkable range of circumstances and contexts – the strength of Commonwealth connection flourishing and in action for the benefit of all.

Our shared values and language, similar institutions of democratic governance and administration, and the Common Law, make it easy for us to understand one another, to discuss obstacles and opportunities, and to work together for the common good.

This results in what we call 'Commonwealth Advantage', with the interoperability of our systems facilitating mutual support and cooperation, and boosting levels of trade and commerce among our member states.

Most importantly, in times of promise and of peril, it raises awareness and appreciation of our interdependence, and the need for exchange and reciprocity.

Deep-rooted and resilient, Commonwealth solidarity bears us up individually and collectively. It helps us in troubled and troubling

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times to make the world a safer place. That is why this year we are celebrating 'A Peace-building Commonwealth'.

By linking governments and institutions – both public and private – and bringing together in a spirit of goodwill people of all ages and from all walks of life, Commonwealth gatherings and networks lay foundations of respect and understanding that enable lasting peace to be built.

In working to find ways of eliminating violence, we draw on wisdom and traditions from a wide range of cultural inheritances in our member states to develop inclusive approaches to peace-building.

A special area of focus is on ending all forms of domestic violence, because unless there is fairness and peace in our homes we cannot expect to enjoy good community relations, or peace at national and regional level.

Every single one of us has a contribution to make. Imagine the impact we can make as a Commonwealth of 2.4 billion people in over fifty countries by saying no to abuse or violence in our homes; taking action against all forms of violence against women, men and children; making bullying unacceptable in our school or workplace; and ensuring that senior citizens are safe from intimidation.

'Commonwealth' is another way of saying 'common good'. 'A Peace-building Commonwealth' starts with each one of us taking individual responsibility, then joining with others so that with mutual support and encouragement we share the good from home to community, then ever more widely to the world.

This Commonwealth Day, as we share our joy in belonging to this great global family – wherever we are and whatever our position – let us commit ourselves afresh through its opportunities and immense potential, and through our own friendships and networks, to thinking and acting as proud and active members of 'A Peace-building Commonwealth'.