



The Commonwealth

Speaking Event for Common Purpose at 33Sixty in Glasgow

It is real a pleasure to welcome you all - and most of all I welcome the buzz you have brought with you.

Whenever the young people of the Commonwealth gather, there is a wonderful buzz, and a sense of expectation that something very special is about to happen.

That is certainly the case today.

It was also the case in 2014 when the people of Glasgow laid on so warm and inclusive a welcome for the athletes and spectators of the Commonwealth Games.

We will remember that later today when The Queen's Baton arrives, on its long but far from lonely journey to the 2018 Gold Coast Games.

It will be a wonderful reminder and a tangible link to the 2.4 billion people of our Commonwealth family living in communities spread across every continent and ocean.

As you are no doubt aware, 33% of the people of the world are Commonwealth citizens, and of that 33%, 60% are under the age of 30.

Hence '33Sixty' - that's you!

You are each and every one of you a huge source of potential.

You are the powerhouse of the Commonwealth.

The vision is yours - the future is in your hands.



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Throughout the Commonwealth, young people are exemplars and eloquent advocates for positive change.

Many are already shaping the institutions and processes that combine to create our world.

When you engage in partnership on values-based leadership and co-management, your energy, enthusiasm, and creativity cascades to wider benefit and advantage.

Indeed, the enrichment of intergenerational cooperation is as integral to our Commonwealth approach as the international and interregional collaboration on which we build.

The Commonwealth is a living organism, with roots going deep, and branches spreading wide.

This broad and inclusive nature of Commonwealth kinship and affinity helps nurture a particular flair for the leadership and partnership needed if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and to measure up to our shared Commonwealth values and principles.

This includes making our cities more inclusive and safe by 2030.

Commonwealth Charter and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Transformation of our world, and the communities we live in is what we aspire to when we come together as a Commonwealth.

It is to share the common good - and, as I have said many times, I want to put the 'wealth' back into Commonwealth, and the 'common' back into 'wealth'.



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Wealth means more than money, it is all that enriches our lives and our communities. All that makes for a fairer, more peaceful, more inclusive, and more sustainable world.

Our Commonwealth Charter expresses those aspirations - which are also our inspiration.

There is pleasing congruence - and, we would like to think, not entirely chance correlation - between the articles of the Commonwealth Charter, adopted by our Heads of Government in 2012, and 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 the seventeen sustainable development goals.

With those goals the global community set out to achieve three extraordinary things by 2030:

- end extreme poverty,
- fight inequality and injustice,
- fix climate change.

They are of vital importance for the people in all 52 of our Commonwealth member countries, 31 of which are small island states, and we are committed to working on them together in a spirit of goodwill and mutual support.

Youth



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It is up to you as young people of the Commonwealth, the 33Sixty generation, to engage and lead on the SDGs - both as beneficiaries and as agents of change.

The global youth population is at an all-time high of 1.8 billion.

640 million of them live, learn, work and play in Commonwealth countries.

The healthier and 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.

Without the active support of youth leaders across the Commonwealth and the world, the attainment of these development objectives is impossible.

If we are serious about youth development, we have to be serious about collecting data on what life is like for young people across the world.

Young people have huge aspirations and vast capabilities, but too often face barriers in realising their potential as productive citizens.

This is why our Commonwealth Global Youth Development Index and Report is such a ground-breaking project - it is the first comprehensive attempt to capture the state of global youth development.

The YDI brings together vital data on young people for analysis and to guide policies and projects for youth development.

It aims to inform policy-makers and raise awareness about the key opportunities and barriers to improving youth development around the world.

The YDI also lays down a challenge.



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Without action to promote young people's empowerment, boosting opportunities for employment, and opening up spaces for political dialogue and civic participation, countries will be squandering their most precious resource.

Involving young people in shaping the world and its systems, and investing in their development, is critical to achieving the global goals, as well as in measuring up to our shared Commonwealth values and principles.

Women

Our Commonwealth approach is to see Gender Equality is a crosscutting factor contributing to our collective goals of social and economic development, democracy, and peace-building.

We lay particular emphasis on the need to open up access by women to financial services, including in the informal sector of developing economies.

There is a strong correlation between increasing the capacity of women to engage in economic enterprise and wider empowerment of women for leadership that will lead to achieving gender equality and sustainable development.

Therefore, through Commonwealth programmes and technical assistance, we are working to increase the participation of women in corporate decision-making at all levels.

This requires reform of banking services so that there is provision of products that are tailored to serve the particular patterns of demand and needs of women.

Alongside this equitable access to climate financing is essential for greater adaptation and resilience strategies, so that the inclusion of women is not hampered by other pressures.



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The value of Commonwealth connection and cooperation lies in the ease with which member states are able to work together with respect and understanding, and to offer mutual support in a spirit of goodwill.

This helps us to build on our Commonwealth Advantage of having similar systems of democratic governance, the Common Law, shared language, and similar institutions of administration and education.

At the 2015 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, leaders reaffirmed their conviction that gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls should be mainstreamed into development, and reaffirmed their commitment to prioritising the issue in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and within the work of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Heads of government welcomed the continuing efforts by member states and Commonwealth bodies to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation as barriers to development and the full realisation of girl's and women's rights.

They encouraged cooperation with regional and global efforts, and concerted action at the national level to develop and implement holistic, comprehensive and coordinated responses and strategies to address this issue, including those aimed at the eradication of poverty, and protecting girls' and women's rights to education.

In light of the above, and taking into account the internationally agreed sustainable development goals, four thematic areas emerged as priorities for the Commonwealth and were endorsed by the 11th Women's Affairs' Ministerial Meeting in Samoa last September.



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The four priorities are:

- (i) Women's economic empowerment;
- (ii) Women in leadership;
- (iii) Ending Violence Against Women and Girls; and
- (iv) Gender and Climate Change.

Every day, everywhere, women and girls suffer pain and trauma as a result of physical and sexual violence.

Millions of minds and bodies are scarred for life. Many die.

This scourge on humanity is avoidable - it is not the result of any agency other than our fellow human beings.

Working together we can and must eradicate the stain and suffering.

If the moral imperative is not enough, as it should be, we can add the economic costs of spiralling social dysfunction, demands on health provision, and lost productivity.

In all these areas our Commonwealth values and principles call us to action.

We can only do that once the fear and terrible reality of mental and physical violence is removed from the daily lives of our mothers, sisters and daughters - and those of every woman and girl in our own local community and worldwide.

Our Commonwealth priority is tackling the scourge of domestic violence.

'Peace in the Home' is vital to the safety and wellbeing of women and girls, and ending the mental and physical suffering and pain that limit opportunity and fulfilment.



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Regenerative development

Our current work on regenerative development to reverse climate change continues to convene visionary thinking and practical expertise in that distinctively inclusive Commonwealth way of finding common ground and consensus on matters of great global concern.

Earlier this year, at our Commonwealth headquarters, I convened a meeting on ‘Regenerative Development to Reverse Climate Change’, bringing together scientists and other visionary experts.

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

New approaches such as biomimicry - have given us carbon-eating concrete and cooling systems based on termite mounds - together with electrical cars and aircraft.

Other disciplines, which give us an understanding of permaculture, circular and symbiotic economics - all made possible by science, technology and changed attitudes - now offer the possibility to reverse that damage.

Paul Hawken was one of many eminent contributors who spoke at our conference on Regenerative Development.

His book ‘Drawdown’ was published on the 16 April and has become a bestseller.

I understand that it has already sold out and been reprinted three times, maybe more by now.



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He lists a hundred innovative approaches and technologies that can help us to reverse the human impacts that lead to climate change, collated from scientists and those all across our Commonwealth.

I want to leave you with this thought: the number one action we can take, the biggest single factor in reversing climate change, is the education of women.

That is why the empowerment of women and youth is so vitally important for each of us, and for all those with whom we share this fragile planet.

Readiness to change and to adapt to new circumstances have always been the foundation for Commonwealth success.

Revitalised and with renewed vigour, we look forward to a UK-hosted Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London next April.

If we are to make our cities more inclusive and safe by 2030, building understanding and strengthening global relationships is more important than ever.

Our shared Commonwealth values and principles continue to offer a promising pathway towards inclusive, equitable and sustainable development for all.

Let's do it!