

Statement by the RT Hon Patricia Scotland QC, the Secretary General of the Commonwealth, to the High-level Segment of the Twenty-sixth Session of the Conference of Parties (COP26) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

10 November 2021

President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, I am honoured to stand before you as Secretary General of the Commonwealth.

In this hall the task of closing the gap between what we know needs to happen, and what is actually happening, falls to each of us.

That gap is measured in years, percentages, and points of a degree. Out there it is measured in human life, health, wealth and the ability of people everywhere to flourish.

2.5 billion people from our 54 member states call the Commonwealth home - 60 percent of whom are under age 30. Millions are already losing lives and livelihoods from the impacts of climate change but they are fighting. We must too.

They know that, without action, the force and frequency of violent weather, fire, shortages of food, water and the threat of rising seas will continue to intensify until it overwhelms them.

They require inclusive, just and equitable actions.

I am proud that the Commonwealth has been bold and consistent in our advocacy and our practical support - not least the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub, Blue Charter, and the Disaster Risk Finance Portal.

But our work alone is not enough.

If the gaps on emissions, improving access to climate finance does not materialise, we risk the most vulnerable nations amongst us being subsumed by sea level rises and being engulfed by debt, exacerbated by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

We must not just raise aspirations, we must deliver bold action.

We can be the difference.

Do not grow weary and lose heart. Dig deeper, come together, and close the gap in these negotiations.

We are all in the same storm, but we are not in the same boat.

We must craft a sustainable recovery for all.

If we lose vulnerable nations who have battled with courage and resilience we lose the fight against climate change.

We cannot fail.