

A Declaration on Young People

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 2009

We, the Commonwealth Heads of Government, welcome the emphasis on young people in this, the 60th year since the foundation of the modern Commonwealth, with its theme of 'thecommonwealth@60 – serving a new generation'. We acknowledge with gratitude the role and active contributions of young people in promoting development, peace and democracy, and in protecting and promoting other Commonwealth values such as tolerance and understanding, including respect for other cultures. We recognise that the future successes of the Commonwealth rest with the continued commitments and contributions in these ways of our young people.

We appreciate the views and outcomes of young people that have been conveyed to us from the Commonwealth Youth Forum. We note young people's calls to be involved as agents of peace-building, and as agents for awareness of – and response to – climate change. We also hear young people's call to be facilitated as drivers of economic development, as young entrepreneurs.

We note the principles of youth development endorsed by Commonwealth Youth Ministers and affirm our own support for the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment.

We endorse coherence in the national, regional and global dimensions of advancing supportive policies towards youth. We also recognise the benefits of engaging youth at all levels of policy dialogue and curriculum development.

In this respect, we reaffirm our support for promoting 'youth mainstreaming', and recognise in particular the benefits of sharing best practices and knowledge of mainstreaming, to assist ministries and stakeholders in building comprehensive and coherent youth-related policies for national needs.

We endorse the project by the Commonwealth Secretariat to develop a comprehensive and replenished resource bank on youth affairs, consisting of data, best practices and thinking in this field, as a reference tool for the development of ambitious and coherent national policies by member countries.

We commend the Secretariat on its work to date in supporting the establishment of national youth plans and national youth councils in member countries. We note with concern that unemployment affects young people more than any other social group. We acknowledge the work of the pilot Commonwealth Youth Credit Initiative (CYCI), and encourage initiatives to expand the scheme and to support comprehensive skills development for youth in partnership with civil society and business.

We seek to enhance the CYCI by turning it into an integrated and holistic enterprise development programme, which is built around comprehensive and mutually reinforcing skills development, funding and mentorship. We pledge to support the new initiative, which should engage a considerably wider range of funders and partners, including our own ministries of youth, international finance institutions, regional organisations, banks and businesses. We welcome initial and generous donations that have been made by Asian and African banks to support further growth in this area.

We also appeal for voluntary contributions for special youth initiatives including the Commonwealth Young Professionals Programme and the network of centres of excellence based in the four Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) regional centres. We recommend that greater partnerships with national and international actors, including intergenerational alliances, be engendered towards the fulfilment of the youth development vision of the Commonwealth.

We recognise the opportunities for young people provided by the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP), celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2009. We express our appreciation for initial commitments of £1.6 million to date made towards the CSFP Anniversary Endowment Fund and anticipate the fund receiving further political and financial support.

29 November 2009

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