

Secretary-General's message, Commonwealth Day 2015

9 March 2015

Statement by: Kamalesh Sharma, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth

Inclusiveness and youthfulness are distinctive characteristics of the Commonwealth. It is through freshness of thought, readiness to test new ideas, and openness to new approaches that our worldwide family continues to fulfil its purpose as a great global good.

We continue to grow and flourish thanks to our pioneering spirit and our strong sense of connection - which is a product of that other distinguishing Commonwealth feature: our convening power.

Spanning the globe, our Commonwealth family links people from among the least and the most populous of nations; connecting remote small island developing states, emerging, and advanced economies. As a proportion of the population, the number of young people in many of our member states is remarkably high.

Together, the diversity and youth of the Commonwealth open up unrivalled opportunities, enabling our citizens to learn from the experiences of others, and to share new ideas developed in a wide range of contexts.

Our theme for this Commonwealth Day and the year ahead is 'A Young Commonwealth'. This reminds us that youth, and progress through innovation are at the heart of the Commonwealth. New approaches and fresh thinking help us to realise our potential, and continually to replenish the collective wisdom that is our shared Commonwealth inheritance, and a rich resource adding global value.

Through practical support and technical cooperation the Commonwealth advances social progress and helps drive economic growth.

Commonwealth connection, particularly between the young people of our member states, encourages the respect and understanding that are so much needed in our world today.

This in turn can strengthen community cohesion and contributes to nation-building; it extends financial inclusion and promotes job creation to create economies that are stronger, more sustainable, and resilient.

The benefits we derive, individually and collectively, as Commonwealth citizens are immense assets that have accrued over time and are constantly renewed. Each generation has a responsibility to protect and to add to this common wealth.

We all have a part to play in remaking the world and the communities in which we live so that they are safer, fairer, and more inclusive. The worldwide Commonwealth web enables us to share in that endeavour, multiplying opportunities, and broadening perspectives.

Commonwealth Day is a good time for each of us to reflect on how, as members of 'A Young Commonwealth', we can draw on its vast reservoirs of goodwill and realise its immense potential. It is by working together that we achieve greatest impact and maximise the beneficial effect of each practical action, turning the dreams and aspirations of our youth into reality.