

Secretary-General's message, Commonwealth Day 2013

11 March 2013

The Commonwealth is a unique enterprise. As a family of 54 independent nations, we unite around shared values and principles. We work together to open up new prospects for individuals and communities, and through national, regional, and international endeavour.

Commitment to common goals brings collective gain. By creating opportunities together, and using the talents of all, we achieve mutual benefit. The potency of individual drive, allied to team spirit, and the possibilities offered through the connections of our worldwide network, are what we seek to express in our 2013 Commonwealth theme: 'Opportunity through Enterprise'

This theme is of course addressed to all in the Commonwealth, but particularly to the young of our ever younger Commonwealth family. It challenges us all to harness the vast and distinctive potential of youth as nation builders, and to encourage them to grasp opportunity through personal creativity, energy and enterprise. It reminds us of the need to build strong political, economic and social structures that support young people in realising their aspirations.

Commonwealth Day 2013 is a very special day in our history. On behalf of the two billion citizens of the Commonwealth – a third of the population of the world – Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth, will sign the new Charter of the Commonwealth at Marlborough House in London on Monday, 11 March. Adopted by the Heads of Government of all our member states on 14 December 2012, the Charter sets out the core values and principles of the Commonwealth. They include democracy, development, human rights, freedom of expression, protecting the environment, and gender equality. Experience of what can be accomplished for the common good by working within the framework of these values and principles is what continues to inspire and motivate the modern Commonwealth. Innovative ideas, carried forward with determination and energy, open up pathways of progress and prosperity.

Our Commonwealth approach aims to extend to all, without discrimination, the opportunities and dividends that flow from economic and social development. Respect and understanding for the dignity of every human being, and the value of what each can contribute, lead us to strive for all to be accorded the scope for shared enterprise and individual achievement.

On Commonwealth Day 2013, let us think of how, using the power of Commonwealth connections and our own personal contributions, we can multiply the opportunities and work together dynamically to build a future that is more equitable and inclusive.