



SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & SOCIETY

COMMONWEALTH DAY 8 MARCH 2010

A Message from Commonwealth Secretary-General Kamalesh Sharma

In the Commonwealth and the world over, our use of science and technology – in the causes of society and development – has been largely for the good.

Recent medical advances have allowed us to understand and tackle the world's greatest health challenges, for instance with new pharmaceuticals, genetic analysis, bio-technology, diagnostics and advanced treatments.

Technological progress has changed the way that we provide information and education, and conduct business. Other advances have allowed us to improve both the quality and the quantity of the food that we have available. New solar, wind and other technologies allow us to use carbon-neutral energy.

It is clear that one of the biggest services that science and technology can render to humanity will be in providing the environmental solutions which the world so actively seeks, and the Commonwealth can play a role in helping developing countries to access that help, especially through partnerships.

The consequences of our progress, however, have not always been fully realised at the time that new technologies were introduced. Some have later presented safety and environmental concerns, while others have raised moral and ethical questions. New ideas and inventions sometimes challenge established values and ways. Questions arise about whether a new technology, for instance, takes a step too far in terms of civil liberties, or if it has other social consequences.

In finding a way forward, each of us as Commonwealth citizens in democratic societies needs to be informed, to understand, and to exchange opinion about the possibilities of science and technology. The discussion needs to be held as much in universities, laboratories and government offices, as in homes, schools, and in the media. Society will benefit fully where all people, including the vulnerable and those on the margins, are involved in public discussion and its outcomes.

In the Commonwealth, we place great emphasis on ensuring that progress embraces all. We build and maintain partnerships and networks, so that people can come together to learn from and share with each other, and profit from this collectively. It is well recognised that science and technology are integral to our future as a global community, and that future possibilities are beyond our present imagining. Science and Technology only fulfil their promise when they serve Society.



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