



19 April 2018

CHOGM Formal Opening Speech by the Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth

Your Majesties, Royal Highnesses, Excellencies, distinguished delegates and guests, Commonwealth friends and colleagues...

Our presence in this place, united in purpose, and aware of the many millions we represent, is a supreme expression of faith in the Commonwealth – a Commonwealth of the people.

We have unparalleled ability to draw together streams of wisdom from secular sources, and from diverse traditions of religious and philosophical thought and practice.

Our values and aspirations are expressed in the Commonwealth Charter, signed by The Queen, Head of the Commonwealth – to whom we owe an untold debt of gratitude.

Both as a symbol of our free association, and through deep personal identification with the highest ideals of respect and understanding, Her Majesty has won a place of great affection in the hearts of people in all countries of the Commonwealth.

On occasions such as this, we become freshly aware of relationships we cherish, and of inheritances being carried forward by successive generations.

New energy and vitality are added as younger members take up responsibility and become active within the circuitry of Commonwealth connection.

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings are distinctive for being both receptive and responsive to the needs of all – especially the young, the marginalised and the vulnerable.

Our dialogue is different, because there is a special dynamic in our Commonwealth ecosystem.

We can think back to the Langkawi Declaration on the Environment made at the 1989 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Malaysia.

A visionary and pioneering statement, that early blossom now bears fruit in initiatives such as The Queen's Commonwealth Canopy and our current work on the Commonwealth Blue Charter and the blue economy.

Such continuing abundance and productivity depend on processes of refreshment and renewal that are essential for the continuing vitality and development of any organism.



Numerous examples show Commonwealth synergy accelerating progress.

To tackle climate change and plastic pollution, to eliminate child, early and forced marriage and modern slavery, to eradicate polio and malaria, and to reduce prevalence of non-communicable diseases.

Upholding democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

Hastening these processes, we now have the Commonwealth Innovation Hub and Commonwealth Office of Civil and Criminal Justice Reform.

CHOGM is our springboard for action.

It is the launch pad that propels us onward, upward, forward together.

We are the believers.

We have faith in the Commonwealth.

That it will continue to adapt and thrive.

Becoming ever more fit for purpose.

Innovating and collaborating.

United in our determination to be as responsive as we are inclusive – towards a common future.