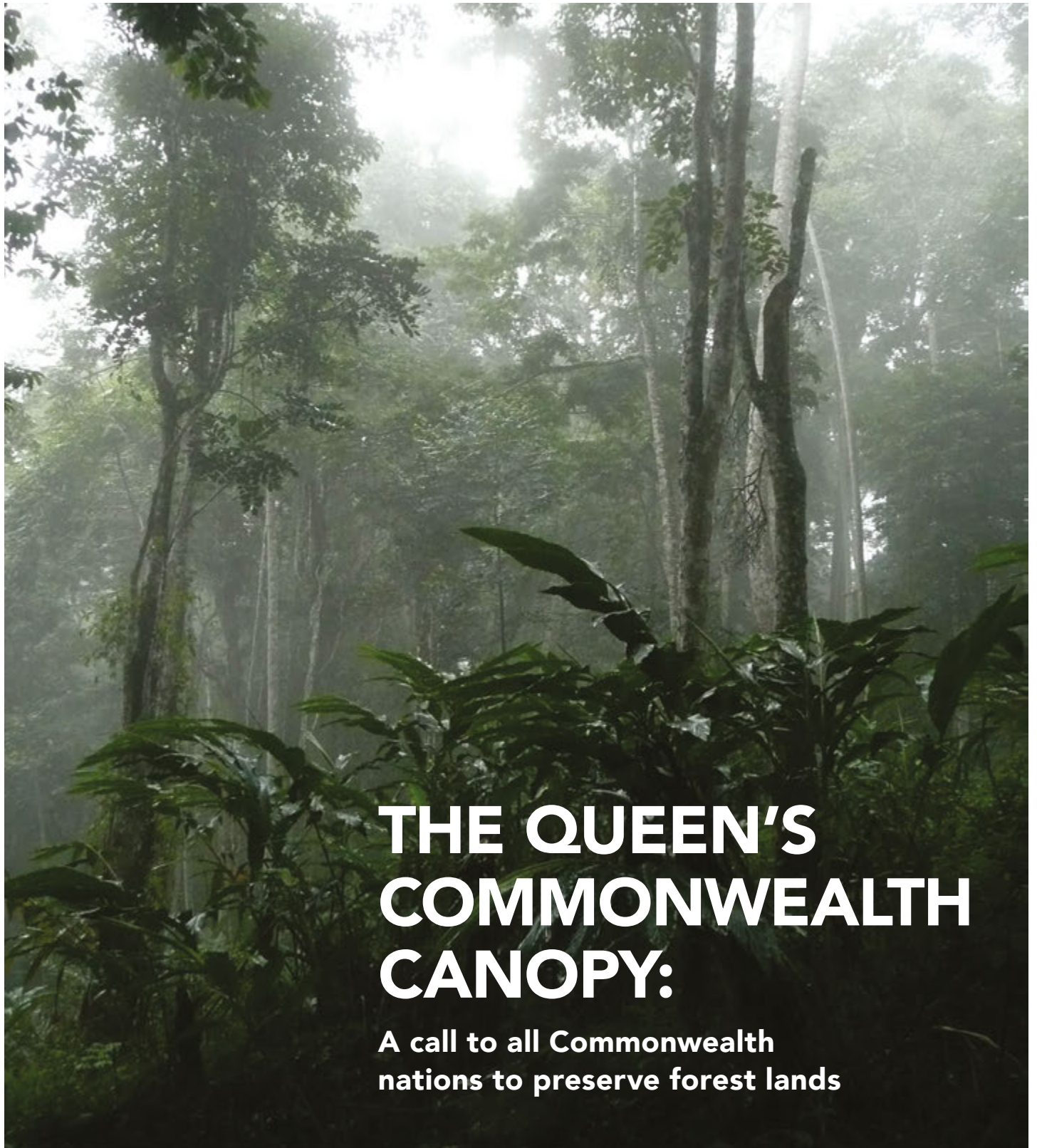


VOICES




THE QUEEN'S COMMONWEALTH CANOPY:

A call to all Commonwealth
nations to preserve forest lands

 **2030 SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS:**
A look at some of the new goals

 **ESSAY COMPETITION:**
Winners fly in to receive awards
at the Palace

 **CHOGM:**
An interview with the new
Secretary-General



The Commonwealth
Environmental Investment Platform

The Commonwealth Environmental Investment Platform (CEIP) is a pan-Commonwealth network linking entrepreneurs and companies in the environmental sector to each other and to international investors.

The CEIP is designed to increase trade, investment, technology transfer and knowledge sharing in vital environmental and sustainable technologies across Commonwealth nations.

Developed in alliance between The Royal Commonwealth Society and Forbury Investment Network.



THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY

forbury
investment network



For more information visit www.theceip.com or call +44 (0)20 7539 8000

WELCOME



The Royal Commonwealth Society is delighted to have participated in a successful CHOGM week, contributing both to the fora and number of side events. We are greatly looking forward to a fruitful relationship with the Secretary General Elect of the Commonwealth, Baroness Patricia Scotland.

Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II was pleased to receive a dedication of rainforests and environmental projects in an initiative known as 'The Queen's Commonwealth Canopy', which is being led by the RCS in partnership with the NGO Cool Earth and The Commonwealth Forestry Association.

The RCS team participated both in the Youth and Women's Fora, together with delegates from the active Commonwealth Youth Gender and Equality Network (CYGEN) we established earlier this year in Malta, the People's Forum in support of the Commonwealth Equality Network, which furthers LGBTI rights, and the Business Forum.

Malta is the Commonwealth Chair in Office for the next two years followed by the UK, which will host CHOGM 2018. There is much work to be done. The issues of climate change and sustainable development, building resilient societies and countering violent extremism, rule of law and anti-corruption are all important agenda items for this coming period and challenges in which the RCS is keen to play its part.

As 2015 closes, we are pleased to have fully embraced its theme of 'A Young Commonwealth' and are already applying ourselves to the 2016 theme, 'An Inclusive Commonwealth'.

Dr. Annette Prandzioch
Chief Operating Officer



THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY

CONTENTS

- 2 IN THE NEWS:** After the Malta summit – hopes for a rejuvenated Commonwealth
- 3 SPOTLIGHT:** The Commonwealth's new Secretary-General
- 4 COMMONWEALTH COMMENTARY:** 2030 Sustainable Development Goals
- 6 PROGRAMME IN PARTNERSHIP:** The Queen's Commonwealth Canopy
- 8 CHOGM:** The four Commonwealth fora
- 10 CHOGM:** RCS and partners events
- 12 RCS PROGRAMME:** The London Commonwealth Youth Summit
- 14 ESSAY COMPETITION:** The Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition 2015
- 16 COMMONWEALTH ANALYSIS:** India-Africa summit
- 18 RCS REGION-WIDE:** Branch engagement with youth
- 20 COMING UP IN THE COMMONWEALTH**

KEEP IN THE CONVERSATION

@TheRCSLondon

/thercs

@the_rcs

LinkedIn.com

AFTER THE MALTA SUMMIT

– HOPES FOR A REJUVENATED COMMONWEALTH

Rita Payne is President of the Commonwealth Journalists Association and a freelance journalist. She writes and speaks at public meetings on the media and international affairs. She worked for nearly thirty years at the BBC; her last position was Asia Editor at BBC World.



Months of speculation are over – Baroness Scotland has been confirmed as Secretary-General of the Commonwealth. She is making history as the first female to hold the post and carries on her shoulders the hopes of supporters who fear the organisation is in danger of slipping into oblivion, if it fails to make a powerful impact on the international stage. Baroness Scotland told The Royal Commonwealth Society that she wants to put the ‘wealth’ back into The Commonwealth, through collaboration and working in partnership to tackle corruption, gender inequality and violence against women. However, turning action into words will not be easy when trying to run a country with 53 members.

A close observer of the Commonwealth, who has seen the workings of the organisation from the inside, says the Commonwealth is not what it used to be – a forum where consensus was achieved with ease. Views have become much more polarised over the past five years with a sharp North-South divide becoming increasingly noticeable.

The old Commonwealth countries strongly wanted to appoint a Commissioner for Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, proposed by the Eminent Persons Group on 2011 but the proposal was rejected. According to the former Commonwealth insider, one reason this proposal was championed by supporters was the perceived failure, in their eyes, of the Secretary-General to be more vocal in confronting derogations from Commonwealth values in countries like Sri

Lanka, Maldives and The Gambia. Countries like UK and Canada have strong political interest in pursuing issues like gay and lesbian rights, early and forced marriage and freedom of religion; some of these issues generate tension and contention within the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth faces a huge challenge of relevance, some even say an existential issue. Only the small states give it importance, because there is no other forum where their voice is magnified. The larger developing states take little interest, whether it is India or Nigeria or South Africa. The new generation of Commonwealth leaders simply does not have the same sentimental affinity to the Commonwealth that the independence generation did. On the other hand, there is a crying need for an organisation like the Commonwealth, which bridges so many divides and which has so many examples of managing and harnessing diversity effectively.

The Commonwealth summit in Malta took place in a far more congenial atmosphere compared to the fractious and controversial meeting in Sri Lanka in 2013. While the announcement of the new Secretary-General inevitably grabbed the headlines, several agreements were reached on the side-lines of the Malta meeting. These include the creation of hubs for climate change and trade. There were other programmes on a range of issues such as counter-terrorism, migration, youth and women’s development.

Under the stewardship of Malta, which will serve as chair of the Commonwealth for the next two years, Prime Minister Muscat wants to make the organisation a rejuvenated force for change better equipped to confront today’s global challenges. Malta and Baroness Scotland are now under pressure to garner support from all government leaders to demonstrate that the Commonwealth still has relevance in today’s increasingly turbulent world.



THE COMMONWEALTH'S NEW SECRETARY-GENERAL

On Friday 27th November, during the 24th biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), the new Secretary-General was announced. Patricia Scotland, Baroness Scotland of Asthal was elected. The RCS was delighted to be granted an interview the next day – below are some extracts.

“One of the wonders of the Commonwealth is that we are a constellation of countries which come together voluntarily. We have common language, we have common values, and we have common law, and that gives us a framework within which we can create something of real importance for ourselves, but which could really be a light for the rest of the world too. We cover all regions; in addition, we cover all faiths and all peoples, so what we develop together will fit the rest of the world. And, because we are a voluntary alliance of nations, we are not as rule-bound as perhaps the UN, or the Council of Europe or others. So that flexibility, I think, gives us a real advantage...

I think none of us have done enough to tackle corruption. One of the problems is, I think, we didn't understand how big it was, how pernicious the impact was, how much it corroded our democracy, and undermined what we wanted to do.

This realisation of the nature of corruption, and the evil impact it can have on development is something that has grown considerably over the last few years. I think now all of us understand, it's non-negotiable, we have to address it, but most importantly, we have to address it together... This isn't something that affects just one of us and not others. It affects all 53 of us and we have an opportunity to come together and have a serious debate about implementing a change which will make the fight against corruption much easier...

Women and equality issues are hugely important to me, as is COP21. You will know that climate change has been spoken about as an existential threat. Many people think of it as an existential threat for the future but for small islands like mine in Dominica, it's omnipresent. We were struck by Storm Erica on the 27th August; it destroyed and affected 90% of Dominica's GDP, it cost us £500 million, so that infrastructural damage was very real. We need to address COP21 with real energy and commitment, and I hope the heads will find a way to come to a united position so that when they go to Paris we will speak with one voice.

When I look at the things I have been able to achieve in the past, it has always been in collaboration with others, and an important partner is civil society. So I am really excited by the way in which civil society is totally engaged with the Commonwealth.

I certainly hope that we will do much more to guarantee and support equality for all our citizens. More than 50% of the Commonwealth is female and we know that young people, under the age of 30, will represent 60% of our population by 2030. That's a huge challenge, so we have to address, if we truly believe in equality, the rights of women and the opportunities for young people. I may be the first Secretary-General who is a woman, but I certainly hope I won't be the last.

Domestic violence is going to be a critical component of my term. Affecting 1 in 3, it is the greatest cause of morbidity among women and girls worldwide. It's a dreadful scourge and if we could eradicate it just think what our world would look like... So I am ready to fight for that, I hope every citizen in the community of the Commonwealth will be willing to fight with me.”

 **MORE INFORMATION**
www.thercs.org/our-work/chogm-2015/chogm-videos/

2030 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

In September 2015, the United Nations agreed a new set of 17 global Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030. Below, key commentators give their reactions to some of these goals and their implications for the Commonwealth.



Goal 4: Quality Education

While SDG4 expands on the MDGs, it does not differ radically from the Dakar framework for action adopted in 2000. However the articulation of such a broad and bold agenda for education to 2030 with a continued commitment to free and universal access, and the inclusion of a teachers' target, could not be taken for granted. These were hard won by developing countries and civil society through the marathon negotiations in which the 2012 recommendations of Commonwealth Education Ministers proved influential in the early stages.

As a result, every Commonwealth country should see their concerns reflected in the SDGs, however several targets are poorly framed, difficult to measure and likely to lack traction.

Improving learning and equity are emerging as the chief priorities for international agencies and with good reason, though whether and how to track learning globally is controversial.

Looking forward there are big questions over financing the new agenda given the significant recent decline in aid to education, and it remains to be seen whether the professed universality of the SDG's will make a difference to Commonwealth Small States and others often marginalised by the dynamics of the MDGs.

Alex Wright is an independent education and international development consultant who worked to support a range of advocacy initiatives around the Education SDGs. He is a former NGO director and has extensive experience of Commonwealth affairs.



Goal 5: Gender Equality

I think the headline with regard to gender and the SDGs is this: The SDGs provide a more robust framework in terms of reflecting a more comprehensive picture of girls and women's empowerment, upon which future work can be built, than the MDGs did – including and beyond SDG5, the stand-alone gender goal. Issues that were left out of the MDGs all together, like violence, economic rights, and child marriage are firmly embedded in Goal 5. Both the MDGs and SDGs contained a standalone gender equality goal, but SDGs go farther by explicitly articulating an aim to 'achieve,' not just 'promote,' gender equality, and to achieve empowerment, of not only women,

but also girls. That's a win. There's also broader integration of gender across the goals. However it is important to note, as many feminist activists have, that the SDGs are no Beijing – that was the women's human rights high water mark, and is far more comprehensive, and specific, than SDG5. That being said, this is a major improvement on our issues beyond MDG3.

Lyric Thompson is Senior Policy Manager at the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), leading the institution's formulation of evidence-based policy recommendations and managing the institution's advocacy efforts with the US Government and internationally. Lyric also serves as Co-chair of the Girls Not Brides USA coalition.



Goal 13: Climate Action

As we celebrate the Sustainable Development Goals, the Goal 13 to 'Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts' is not yet adopted and is to be discussed at the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change. While waiting for an historical decision to be agreed – or not – in Paris, we already acknowledge the significant progress made to recognize climate change as a severe issue whose impacts can only be tackled with urgent measures as the baseline of a global response. Contrary to the Millennium Development Goal 7 which aimed to 'Ensure Environmental Sustainability' only, the Goal intends to act

on both policy and citizens' capabilities to contribute to the solutions, such as Small Island Developing States and Youth which form relevant constituents. This gives important hopes that the Goal 13, once agreed at COP21, would provide essential enabling environments to 'Transforming Our World' through better co-ordinated, resourced and urgent measures taken towards a safer climate for all.

Jean Paul Brice Affana A citizen of Cameroon, Jean Paul is Co-ordinator of the Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network (CYCN). He also co-ordinates *Actions Vitales pour le Développement durable (AVD)*, a youth-led NGO in Cameroon. Jean Paul has experience in developing and implementing climate and environmental focused projects, programmes and campaigns using formal and non-formal methods. He served in 2011 as a Focal Point of YOUNGO (UNFCCC Youth Constituency).



Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 is something of a catchall concept, encompassing different strands of thinking. The sub-goal of providing legal identity to all appears, at face value, out of place next to sub-goals on reducing illicit arms flows. However, building on Amartya Sen's Commonwealth report *Civil Paths to Peace*, there are numerous elements of this goal which suggest a role for the Commonwealth, and several aspects where the Commonwealth can add global value. Commonwealth governments can build on their use of a common language and similar political and legal systems to collaborate and share knowledge. The Commonwealth Secretariat and certain quasi-governmental

organisations, such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, can support states by assisting with institution building for example by establishing national human rights institutions or parliamentary strengthening. Finally, Commonwealth Civil Society can play a role in sharing its diverse industry expertise on everything from law to public management with policy makers, and can lead the way in broaching and developing new policy areas and societal debates.

Lewis Brooks is Public Affairs Officer at the Royal Commonwealth Society. He is responsible for policy development, advocacy and research at the RCS including the organisation's current focus on gender equality in the Commonwealth.



THE QUEEN'S COMMONWEALTH CANOPY

Etosha, Namibia © CFA

The Queen's Commonwealth Canopy (QCC) is an initiative designed to create a network of forest conservation projects throughout the 53 nations of the Commonwealth.

Launched in November 2015 and named to mark Her Majesty's service and dedication to the Commonwealth, the project will link Commonwealth countries through the preservation of all types of natural forest and indigenous vegetation for future generations, demonstrating the capacity of Commonwealth countries to act together and to benefit from shared knowledge and experience.

The initiative, conceived by the NGO Cool Earth, will be led by The Royal Commonwealth Society in partnership with Cool Earth and the Commonwealth Forestry Association (CFA).

Opening the 24th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Malta, Her Majesty The Queen said: "And I have been especially touched by one such project, The Queen's Commonwealth Canopy, which has been proposed by Commonwealth countries wanting to harness their collective expertise and resources to protect the world's forests. This and other initiatives are a practical demonstration of the

power of the Commonwealth, working as a group, to effect real change for generations to come."

Currently, members of the Commonwealth are working individually to preserve forest and indigenous vegetation in their own countries, but there is no co-ordination across the Commonwealth. By linking projects in The Queen's name, there is an opportunity to share best practice, raise awareness globally of the value of saving forests and indigenous vegetation and the impact on climate change, use the existing relationships of the Commonwealth to create new, collaborative conservation initiatives and employ the concerted power of a major co-ordinated initiative to access international funding for forest protection.

The QCC will showcase examples of conservation best practice across the Commonwealth, demonstrating that Commonwealth citizens are leading the world in efforts to protect the forest, upon which their communities and the planet as a whole depend. Participation in the QCC will bring credibility and integrity to individual



initiatives and strengthen their sustainability and development, as well as raise the profile of the benefits of forest conservation. It will show that, irrespective of geography, economy, culture or tenure, solutions exist to the threats facing these most critical of ecosystems.

“
This and other initiatives are a practical demonstration of the power of the Commonwealth, working as a group, to effect real change for generations to come.”

Her Majesty The Queen

Every Commonwealth country can participate in the QCC by nominating and dedicating existing or future conservation projects. Those countries with limited forest cover can participate through the planting of native trees, the conservation of other indigenous vegetation or by supporting QCC partnerships with other Commonwealth nations. Cool Earth and the Commonwealth Forestry Association will be available to assist in the development of such projects, and training initiatives will be introduced to develop standards of management.

The QCC is an inclusive endeavour to champion the best forest conservation practices of the Commonwealth. It does not seek to place financial or regulatory liabilities on the participating initiatives. The Royal Commonwealth Society, in consultation with Cool Earth and the Commonwealth Forestry Association, co-ordinates a submission process to ensure that proposed QCC partner projects meet the criteria for inclusion in the initiative.

THE PARTNERS

Cool Earth is a UK-based charity that works alongside indigenous villages to halt rainforest destruction.
www.coolearth.org

The Commonwealth Forestry Association links foresters, scientists, students and policy-makers throughout the Commonwealth to seek ways of wise forest management.
www.cfa-international.org

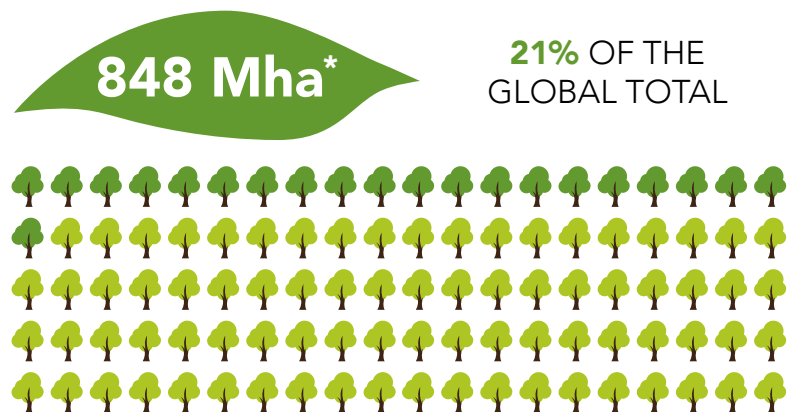
“

It is difficult to overstate how much we still rely on forests... They are still producing around 20% of the world's water and oxygen; they harbour 2/3 of the world's biodiversity. And of course in terms of climate change no other terrestrial ecosystem is so effective at sponging up our emissions...

Since the Commonwealth was created in 1949, we've seen half of the forest cover in the world go. Of what's left around 1/3 is strictly endangered, around 1/4 is depleted and the remainder is obviously at great risk.”

Matthew Owen, Director, Cool Earth

TOTAL FOREST AREA IN THE COMMONWEALTH



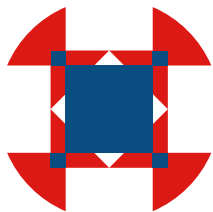
“

The future of the Commonwealth's forests is at a crossroads. We can either look at exploiting and depleting this vital resource or we can recognize its value and ensure we support sustainable forest management. The CFA's work has shown that there is a clear desire throughout the Commonwealth from governments, professional foresters and citizens to ensure that our forest resources are managed in a way that ensures their future in perpetuity. The QCC is a unique opportunity for us to do this by working across the Commonwealth, involving all levels of society.”

Alan Pottinger, Technical Director, Commonwealth Forestry Association

 **MORE INFORMATION**
www.queenscommonwealthcanopy.org

THE FOUR COMMONWEALTH FORA



The Commonwealth People's Forum

Malta saw the premier gathering of Commonwealth civil society alongside the Heads of Government. The People's Forum took a more coherent approach than in previous years, exploring the single topic of 'resilience'. The gathering sought to expand this idea beyond the economic and physical resilience of countries to understand 'what makes societies resilient?'

Keynote speaker, Vandana Shiva, explored the idea of resilience and the interconnected nature of societies and life. Delving into more practical issues, the forum discussed the rights of indigenous communities, resilience against climate change, alternatives to measuring states by GDP, urban planning, conflict prevention, and LGBT rights.

An outcomes statement, The Malta Declaration, combined these discussions into a single articulation of why and how to build resilience in societies. The People's Forum utilised innovative forms of policy

dialogues to draw in government policy makers and, in a Commonwealth first, saw controversial issues, including LGBT rights, being constructively and respectfully debated between Foreign Ministers and civil society, represented on this issue by a young LGBT activist from Barbados. From new government-civil society collaboration to a coherent theme, the 2015 People's Forum provided a strong prelude to the Heads of Government Meeting, embodying the CHOGM 2015 theme – Adding Global Value.



The Commonwealth Business Forum

This year the forum was organised by the Commonwealth Economic and Investment Council (CWEIC) together with the Government of Malta. As Adrian Hillman, CBF Chair, explained at the Opening Ceremony, with over 1,000 delegates from 80 countries and some 20 Heads of State attending, the aim of the Forum was to provide high level dialogue between business and government leaders with a view to promoting sustainable growth across the Commonwealth. Topics covered included

infra-structure, technology, healthcare, financial services and centres, trade finance, high value tourism, sustainability, the Blue Economy and smart cities. There was also the opportunity for Commonwealth members to showcase investment opportunities in their individual countries.

In his opening address, Secretary General Kamallesh Sharma stated that 'the Commonwealth is open for business and to business'. He commented on the cascading levels of participation at the Business Forum since the first one that took place at the Edinburgh CHOGM in 1997. He spoke of the 'Commonwealth advantage' of the common ties in law, judicial structures and banking letters of credit, as all being part of the terrain of familiarity for business.



The Secretary General announced the launch of a Commonwealth Trade Financing Facility, signed by Mauritius, Sri Lanka, India and Malta, to help boost trade and investment, in particular for importers and small island and developing countries.



The Commonwealth Women’s Forum

The first ever Commonwealth Women’s Forum built on discussions started in Perth in 2011 and opened its doors to delegates in Malta from the 22nd-24th November. The forum was opened by HE Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta, the Maltese Prime Minister and the Commonwealth Secretary General. Empowering women’s leadership in politics, the judiciary and business were key themes of the conference with Commonwealth organisations, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK, Commonwealth Magistrates and Judges Association and the Commonwealth Businesswomen’s Network all playing a role in pushing these agenda. Women’s health and gender based violence were also key topics of discussion in the programme. The Royal Commonwealth Society and the Commonwealth Youth Gender and Equality Network led the way in supporting young gender equality champions with a session on gender and youth leadership which

fostered intergenerational dialogue. The Women’s Forum outcome statement urged Commonwealth governments to create an independent Technical Working Group on gender equality and women’s empowerment, in alignment with the targets for the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Women’s Forum also urged the next CHOGM host to explore holding the Forum as part of the calendar of events.



© Commonwealth Secretariat



Commonwealth Youth Forum

“Together we can seize the future, because we are greater than the sum of our individual contributions. We are, and forever will be, one strong, one united Commonwealth”. With these words the newly elected Chair, Kishva Ambigapathy from Malaysia, accepted his 2-year position at the helm of the youth-led Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC), which represents the young people in the Commonwealth. The 10th Commonwealth Youth Forum, which took place from 21-25 November, gathered together the official youth representatives from all Commonwealth member countries, along with leaders of pan-Commonwealth

youth networks and youth organisations. The formal business included the General Assembly of the CYC, the adoption of priority policies, and the election of a new executive team of nine young adults.

At this, the first major gathering of Commonwealth young people since the adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, over 200 delegates aged 18-29 took the opportunity to discuss the key issues facing their generation. Under the theme of ‘Adding Global Value... #WhatNext?’, debate focused on economic, environmental, social and political development, with the aim of achieving a consensus on policies to address: the challenges and opportunities facing young people; how they can participate in achieving the SD Goals; and their role in upholding the Commonwealth Charter and the continued relevance of the Commonwealth. Their final Call to Action prioritised youth employment and the empowerment of young people as partners in peace-building and reconciliation processes, and climate change adaptation. Youth representatives went on to share their recommendations with Heads of Government.



RCS AND PARTNERS CHOGM EVENTS

EMPOWERING THE COMMONWEALTH YOUTH GENDER AND EQUALITY NETWORK AT CHOGM



The RCS convened the Commonwealth Youth Gender and Equality Network (CYGEN) earlier this year in Malta recognising that young voices on gender equality were missing. CYGEN returned to Malta, with the help of the RCS, to continue this work at CHOGM. During the Women's Forum they ran a session to foster inter-generational dialogue on empowering

young gender equality champions. The session brought together speakers from the Commonwealth Secretariat, UN Women, and civil society groups along with audience members from both the Women's Forum and Youth Forum. Practical recommendations drawn up as part of this dialogue included urging national youth councils to recruit gender advisers to ensure adequate representation, and ensuring national curricula have a 'gender lens'.

CYGEN and the RCS also met with the Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls, to present these recommendations and to discuss building a youth voice into global gender discussions, including the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministerial Meeting in 2016.

www.facebook.com/CYGENetwork

OUT OF THE BLUE, PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION AWARDS



The exhibition of winners' photographs, staged at the Youth Forum, moved to the Business Forum and finally settled at the Maritime Museum in Malta. There a special event was held at which HRH The Prince of Wales, whose International Sustainability

Unit initiated the competition, awarded Ashley Wee from Canada the Overall Winner prize.

Supported by the Royal Commonwealth Society and National Geographic the exhibition included all 26 category winners, runners up and highly commended entries from the 800 plus entries.

Two of the four competition judges were able to be present along with High Commissioners and other guests who were addressed by HRH The Prince of Wales, who said: "... these photographs, I think, really do bring to life, in such a visibly compelling way, the importance, value, fragility and sheer beauty of our oceans."

www.outofthebluecompetition.com

CLIMATE CHALLENGE CONFERENCE – ADDRESSING THE ‘WORLD’S GREATEST SINGLE CHALLENGE’



On 26th November, the Climate Challenge Conference, hosted by The Commonwealth Environmental Investment Platform (The CEIP) was a key event prior to COP21

to address climate change and unite a significant world group to come together and deal with the huge environmental challenges of this century.

100 delegates gathered at the event which was supported by the RCS, to engage with climate resilience and the issues we face. Each speaker offered inspiring yet practical advice for Commonwealth countries. Michael Sippitt, Chairman of The CEIP said: “Climate Change is arguably the greatest single challenge facing the world today, looming over all our tomorrows.

“The Climate Challenge is not for the faint-hearted. Its implications do not make for happy reading. Nevertheless, it is reality. Action must be taken and it cannot be left solely to public investment. We must use the power of business and the engine of economic opportunity to sustainably address climate change. The Commonwealth provides an excellent ready-made platform for us all to unite in this challenge.”

www.theceip.com

CELEBRATING THE COMMONWEALTH FAMILY – ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY RECEPTION



On the occasion of the 24th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, as the foreign ministers finished their deliberations,

the RCS brought together members of the Commonwealth family to celebrate a successful CHOGM in Malta. The Maltese President, HE Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, presided over the occasion. In her address she praised the role of civil society in the Commonwealth and much of the work of the RCS. The President has previously opened the inaugural meeting of the Commonwealth Youth Gender and Equality Network in May. She also mentioned her gratitude to the RCS for exploring the potential for greater engagement with children in the Commonwealth. In addition to the President’s involvement, the RCS hosted Ministers, High Commissioners, Commonwealth civil society and associated organisations as well as members of the newly elected Commonwealth Youth Council, drawn from across the Commonwealth.

www.thercs.org/our-work/chogm-2015

THE LONDON COMMONWEALTH YOUTH SUMMIT

On Saturday 3rd October the Royal Commonwealth Society, in partnership with The Daneford Trust, Tower Hamlets Youth Service and its Youth Council, held the London Commonwealth Youth Summit. Tower Hamlets Council Chamber was transformed for the day to host a simulation of the upcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) which takes place in Malta.

During the event, 70 young Londoners role-played Commonwealth Heads of Government along with media representatives and senior officials, and took part in debates about key current issues faced by the international association of countries. The event reflected and celebrated the diversity of London as a city renowned for its multiculturalism and Commonwealth links.

The summit started with introductions from Councillor Rachel Saunders, Young Mayor Den Yang Sang, RCS Director of Youth and Education, Helen Jones, and Co-ordinator of The Daneford Trust, David Thorp. Milena Bacalja acted as the Secretary-General for the day and skilfully steered the proceedings.

With much anticipation the first debate of the day got underway, focusing on Climate

Change and its dramatic consequences for some Commonwealth countries, especially small island states. Their ability to deal with rising sea levels was discussed, as well as offers of assistance from other Commonwealth nations. "What would you do if your country was sinking?" asked the Fijian delegate, urging other Commonwealth nations to consider the issue of Climate Change as a priority. It was concluded that developed Commonwealth nations should do more in order to reduce CO2 emissions and slow down the speed at which sea levels are rising.

The second topic under discussion was Child Marriage. Delegates debated different ways Commonwealth countries could work together on the issue. The debate helped delegates to grasp the enormity of the task of ending the practice, which is engrained culturally and socially in many Commonwealth nations. However, the difficulty faced did not deter their desire to find a solution to the issue. Consensus was attained as countries agreed that "education is empowerment" and that by being educated about their rights young people can stand up against the issue.

The last debate touched on Violent Extremism and triggered a broad and intense discussion with issues such as radicalisation being raised. Acknowledging the complexities of the issue, delegates jointly declared that the power of the media should be harnessed and used to enhance peace and greater respect and understanding.

As the delegates were debating the last issue of the day, they were interrupted by an unexpected crisis scenario! It was announced that a deadly virus had been released from a laboratory and the delegates were urged to work quickly in order to stop its spread. Thankfully, the



virus was contained, through the imposition of border closures and travel bans between countries. Additionally, Commonwealth countries with stronger medical capacity offered donations to help treat citizens suffering from infection.

Reflecting on the day, Helen Jones, Director of Youth & Education at the RCS, said: "It was incredibly inspiring to see so many young people taking such an active role during the debates and being enthused by the Commonwealth". The day provided a fascinating insight into the thoughts and perspectives of young Londoners on the Commonwealth. The ways in which they handled and resolved the mock situations all have much relevance to today's Commonwealth. An outcome from the day was a Statement of Recommendations which was shared with the UK's youth representatives to the Malta Commonwealth Youth Forum.

Revitalising a key youth project

The London Commonwealth Youth Summit provided the RCS with an opportunity to re-establish a key youth programme and strengthen a growing network of youth-led model CHOGM initiatives taking place around the Commonwealth. Over half the Commonwealth's population is under the age of 30, yet young people, especially in the UK, often know very little about an international organisation in which their country plays a leading role. Commonwealth Youth Summits give young people the opportunity to learn more about the modern Commonwealth and the challenges facing its diverse member countries. Acting as leaders of countries from across the Commonwealth, in a forum where all have an equal voice and where decisions are arrived at by consensus, participants develop political literacy and global awareness along with valuable negotiation and communication skills. Future Commonwealth Youth Summits will not only continue to raise awareness of the Commonwealth among young people but also provide them with platforms to express themselves and engage with Commonwealth-wide issues.

 **MORE INFORMATION**
 www.thercs.org/youth-and-education/commonwealth-youth-summits





THE QUEEN'S
COMMONWEALTH ESSAY COMPETITION 2015

A RECORD BREAKING RESPONSE

The Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition has experienced another remarkable year of success. Based on this year's 'A Young Commonwealth' theme, the competition attracted a record number of over 13,000 submissions from young writers aged 18 and under.

The theme acknowledged that young people account for the majority of the Commonwealth's population and sought to recognise their contribution to the world, as well as their capacity and potential to shape the future. Schools from 49 Commonwealth countries and territories participated in the competition, with students demonstrating

their skilled use of language as they responded to topics using their unique experiences and cultural insights.

Ranging from creative writing pieces to analytical essays, this year's submissions once again reflected the diversity of opinions and paradigms found across the Commonwealth, with participants impressing judges with their sensitive and thought-provoking narratives. Comprised of more than 90 volunteer judges from across the Commonwealth, the judging team chose over 3,000 entries to receive Gold, Silver or Bronze Awards before selecting the most notable essays to forward onto the final judging panels. After much debate, the Junior and Senior panel judges decided on the overall winners of the competition.

Sixteen-year-old Paraschos Cant, a student at Pascal English School in Limassol, Cyprus, was named the Senior Winner. His winning letter, inspired by the topic 'Youth versus Experience', stood out to judges for its upfront critical voice and incisive wit which cleverly uses youthful naivety to compare countries and citizens to classrooms and classmates.

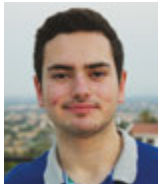
Eleven-year-old Nathan Swain, a pupil at St Mary's School in Tristan da Cunha – one of the most remote islands in the world – was selected as the Junior Winner for his response to the topic 'I am the Future'. Specific, succinct and clearly articulated, his account of generational exchange

RIGHT: HRH The Duchess of Cornwall with the prize winners at the Award Ceremony in the Throne Room at Buckingham Palace



© Bettina Strenske

Extract from Paraschos' winning entry: 'An Open Letter to the World's Leaders'



Dear Leader,

I hope that I find you well and that all the people you represent, old and young, are happy.

If they are not all happy, I hope that they are well. If they are not well, I hope that they are getting better. If they are not getting better, I hope that they have hope.

I have hope.

Of course, I'm sure that you must have a more developed sense of hope than I do – after all, you have the experience to understand the pressures, politics, economics and religions of your country far better than me and so can guide them in the best way possible to provide the most happiness, health and hope to your people.

Being just a youth myself, what I think that means is that you probably just think like I do – but in a more grown up way that gets more done, better.

But I thought I should check because I'm led to believe that I and people of my age might be a little naïve and so in your journey through the challenges of responsibility, growing up, coming to power and developing all your experience – you may already have forgotten more than youngsters like me think we know yet.

Extract from Nathan's winning entry: 'I am the Future'



I want to be a carpenter and a builder and learn the skills from the elder people on my island. As I learn, the skills will be passed from those people on to me. When I grow up I want to be just like my dad. My dad learnt how to be a carpenter from his dad and I will learn the skills from my dad.

Watching my dad doing his work is amazing sometimes. I do learn a lot from my dad just by watching him. When my dad started working as a carpenter he was only seventeen. Since then my dad has built his own house and used his carpentry skills to build his own fitted kitchen and furniture. My dad taught me that not all work is easy but still I'm looking forward to learning.

demonstrates a mature sense of communal responsibility for his island home.

Judges also selected eighteen-year-old Tawanda Mulalu, a pupil of Maru-a-Pula School in Gaborone, Botswana as the Senior Runner-up. His well-informed essay shows a careful awareness of the relationship between the physical and life sciences and the future of Africa; judges were struck by the balance between his humble voice and his great ambitions. Fourteen-year-old Martina Watler, a pupil at St Ignatius Catholic School in the Cayman Islands, was named the Junior Runner-up for her vulnerable yet brave examination of a young girl's inner world, her anxieties and her dreams.

The four overall winners were invited to London to take part in a week of educational and cultural activities which culminated with an Award Ceremony at Buckingham Palace where HRH The Duchess of Cornwall, on behalf of Her Majesty The Queen, recognised the achievement of these young writers.

“*Cambridge University Press was delighted to sponsor this prestigious international essay competition for young people for the third year running. The quality of writing was very high and we were delighted to host the prize-winners and their families in Cambridge for a day in recognition of their significant achievement.*”

Elaine Allwright, Head of Strategic Partnerships, International Education, Cambridge University Press



2016 Essay Competition opens for submissions

Remaining alert and relevant to young people is a key aim of the RCS as we continue to invite them to take part in the essay competition. The Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition 2016 – based on the theme 'An Inclusive Commonwealth' – is now open for submissions. It invites young people to think about whether or not it is possible to be living responsibly and tolerantly in an increasingly interconnected Commonwealth. See more at www.thercs.org/youth.

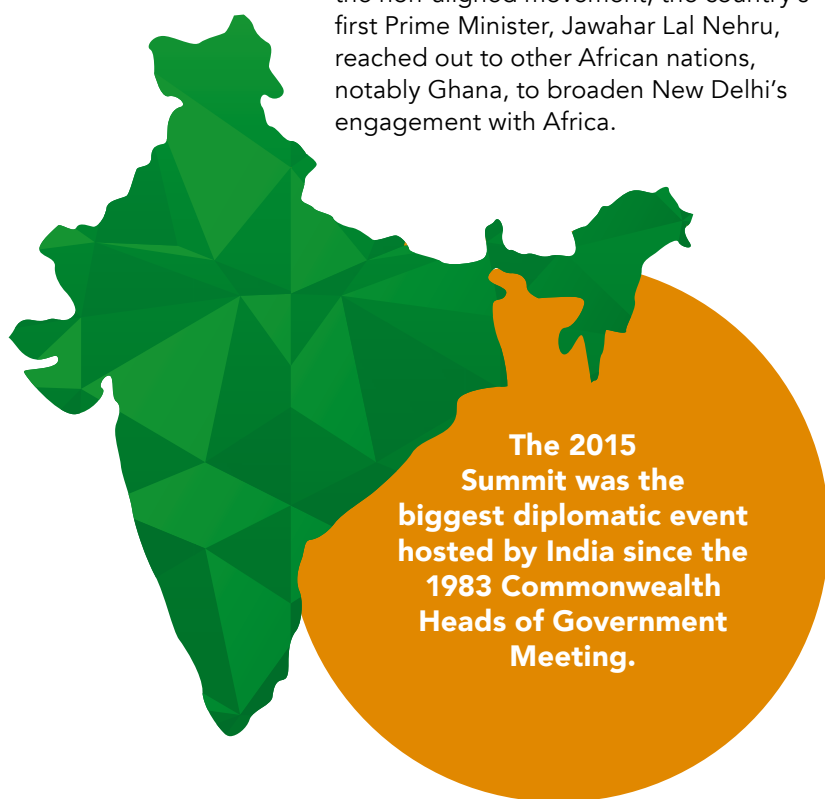
INDIA-AFRICA SUMMIT AN ANVIL FOR THE COMMONWEALTH

In October, India hosted the 2015 India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS). **Ashis Ray** reviews the meeting, its focus and potential benefits for the Commonwealth.



India's links with Africa cover millennia. More noticeably, in the 19th century, during British rule, people of Indian origin settled in eastern and southern parts of the continent. This included Mohandas Gandhi, who spent 21 years in South Africa, where his experiments with non-violent non-co-operation first registered success. It catapulted him from a mere barrister to a 'Mahatma' (or Great Soul).

After Indian independence in 1947, as one of the founders and leading lights of the non-aligned movement, the country's first Prime Minister, Jawahar Lal Nehru, reached out to other African nations, notably Ghana, to broaden New Delhi's engagement with Africa.



In the new millennium though, a cash rich China has stolen a march over India in the realm of economic involvement and thereby considerably increased its influence in the continent. In 2009, it surpassed the United States as the region's largest trading partner. Currently, this turnover is estimated to be around \$200 million. By comparison, India's volume is \$72 million.

But Africa, which has undoubtedly benefited immeasurably from exports to and investments from China, is concerned that the slowdown in the Chinese economy may have a negative impact. In some African circles, there are also worries about the exploitative nature of Chinese policy. In such a scenario, it is perhaps an opportunity for India to enlarge its footprint in a caring manner.

India hosted its first tri-ennial India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) in 2008 in New Delhi, the second at Addis Ababa in 2011, with the third postponed from last year to this because of the Ebola outbreak and held in late October 2015 in the Indian capital.

At the first and second meetings, only 14 and 11 countries respectively, chosen by the African Union (AU), attended. This year, quite impressively, all 54 countries of the continent participated; 40 of them at the level of head of government and/or head of state. It was the biggest diplomatic event hosted by India since the 1983 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

Also, in terms of both optics and setting out a direction for India-Africa relations the summit was, arguably, a success. But the question, as always, is whether these will lead to more intimate relations and a concrete co-operation.

The summit concluded with a 'Delhi Declaration' and an 'India-Africa Framework for Strategic Co-operation'. Both documents emphasised the need for the two parties to collaborate to attain ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030; however there was a deficit of detail on how these would be achieved.

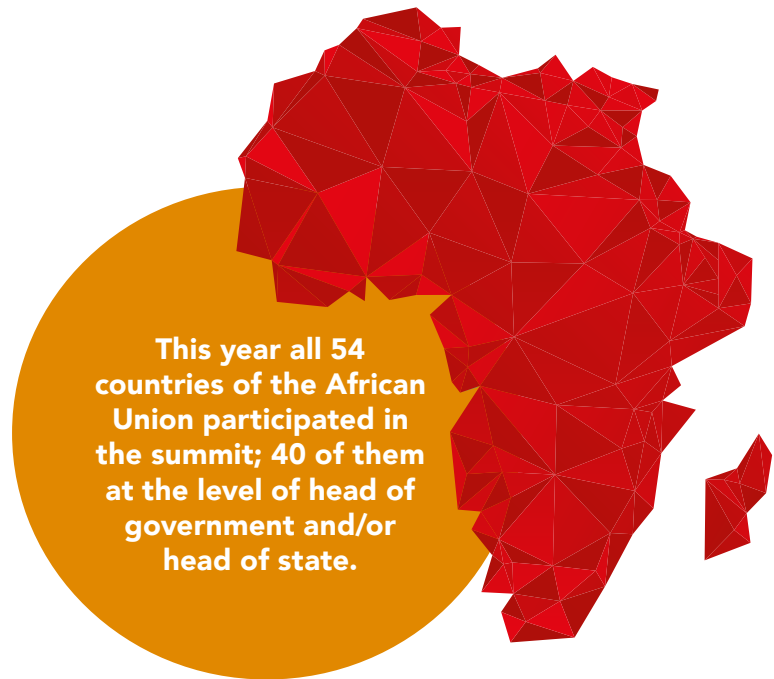
There was a general call for the United Nations (UN) to 'function in a transparent, efficient and effective manner', but no steps were outlined on how IAFS' constituents, bilaterally or multilaterally, could contribute to this.

Galvanising support for India's objective of becoming a permanent member of the UN Security Council was an unwritten purpose of the IAFS. The Delhi Declaration committed the two sides to making the UN 'more regionally representative, democratic, accountable and effective'. But there were differing ambitions within such wording, since India is part of a G-4 (with Germany, Japan and Brazil) – which clearly does not include Africa – to realise its aspiration.

The Sirte Declaration of 2005 unambiguously lays out the AU position on UN reforms, which is that Africa must have at least two permanent seats and two non-permanent seats on the Security Council. To paper over the situation, India and Africa diplomatically noted their respective positions. New Delhi's charm offensive notwithstanding, Africa could, for instance, make its support for India's candidature conditional upon India agreeing to two permanent African members. Nevertheless, the two sides demanded a 'decisive push' at the UN General Assembly on UNSC expansion.

The official literature emerging from the summit, interestingly, underplayed reference to Indian peacekeeping for the UN in Africa. India generally trumpets its yeoman's service in this sphere, but Africa is not in unqualified concurrence with this as there have been a few instances of alleged financial and sexual misconduct by Indian troops. There is, in fact, a veiled acknowledgement of such incidents by a mention of how they might endorse reforms in this area.

Another aspect which caught commentators' attention is India's role vis-a-vis the threat





to peace and security in Africa. The Indian Navy has, of course, been patrolling the waters off the horn of Africa to contain piracy and organised crime. But India does not appear to be willing to go beyond this assignment, except to support Africa 'to implement the AU 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy'. South Africa is, of course, entwined with India and Brazil in maritime co-operation known as IBSAMAR.

The summit, instead, focussed on closer ties on infrastructure development, duty free tariff, alleviation of Africa's debt burden, food security, healthcare, renewable energy and, importantly, empowerment of women. In the past decade, India has given concessional credit of \$9 billion to Africa. A further \$10 billion of this facility over the next five years was announced at the summit.

Needless to mention, of all the continents, Africa possesses the highest number of Commonwealth members – 18. The IAFS was, therefore, also an informal, unofficial gathering of 19 Commonwealth countries. Enhanced exchanges, greater understanding between them, regardless of the forum from which these emanate, could be an anvil for Marlborough House to cement further cohesion within its fold.

MORE INFORMATION

 Ashis Ray is the longest serving Indian foreign correspondent, having worked in this capacity for 38 years, mainly for BBC and CNN, but also for India's Ananda Bazar Group and The Times of India. London based, he is now Director of Raymedia Ltd. and creator of the Global India Rich List.

 For more on the Summit, visit www.iafs.in.

BRANCH ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUTH

2015 was themed 'A Young Commonwealth'. Branches promoted the Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition and the Queen's Young Leaders' programme which generated hundreds of RCS Associate Fellows, Commonwealth-wide. Many branches also celebrated Commonwealth Day with youth-focussed activities (*Commonwealth Voices*, April). Working with schools, youth movements, British Council offices, British High Commissions, universities and businesses, branches have launched new initiatives to engage with local young people. We showcase a few here.



South Australia

South Australia Branch has created an Instrumental Ensemble to provide additional performance opportunities in music for talented young South Australians to encourage them in becoming full time musicians. They present two Chamber Concerts each year.

Now in their third year, the branch's Art and Drawing Competitions reach out to schools in even the very smallest of communities, such as Miltaburra Area School (7 hours drive from Adelaide), which engage enthusiastically and pupils from which regularly win awards.



Jersey Branch

Jersey Branch actively promotes the Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition sending details to every school in the island. In 2015, they celebrated the success of a record 61 Jersey students who won awards in the 2014 competition, including Max de Bourcier, winner of the entire Junior Section, with a prize-giving in the Assembly Room at the Town Hall in St Helier. Each year the RCS Jersey Award Cup is given to the writer of the essay judged to be the best submitted by island students.

Participating schools were invited by the Bailiff of Jersey to send representatives to attend the 'Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth' ceremony at the cenotaph in St. Helier on Commonwealth Day. Fly a Flag seeks to encourage as many flags as possible to be flown across all countries on Commonwealth Day.



1: RCS South Australia Ensemble

2: 'Our truckies do a great job delivering gear all over Australia'. Drawing winner. Jacob Ryan.

3: RCS Jersey Prize-giving

Ottawa Branch

Each year, the Ottawa branch promotes youth leadership opportunities such as a youth-led planning team for the annual National Student Commonwealth Forum, the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, 33Fifty the Commonwealth Youth Leadership Programme, the Commonwealth Youth Gender and Equality Network, the Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council and the sponsorship of a member of the Canadian delegation to the Commonwealth Youth Forum.

Ottawa branch also runs:

- Scholarships for graduate students from Commonwealth countries
- The National Student Commonwealth Forum – a mock CHOGM for which high school students meet with Members of Parliament, Senators, and High Commissioners, discuss current Commonwealth issues in the Senate and work towards resolutions.

Hong Kong Branch

Early in 2015, RCS Hong Kong Branch launched its Young Fellows programme bringing together young leaders from Commonwealth countries based in Hong Kong. Thirteen countries were represented at the launch and over sixty young people have since become Founder Members. The aim of the initiative is to increase the number and raise the profile of young branch members while creating a vibrant network for the exchange of ideas and contacts in a non-biased, non-political and inclusive environment that promotes the values of the Commonwealth Charter.



4



5

LEADERBLAST!



7



6

RCS Africa Regional Office in Ghana

Leaderblast – an annual conference created by the RCS Africa regional office was inaugurated in Accra in May 2015, to empower 50 young leaders with a unique skill set in leadership and social entrepreneurship. Fifty potential leaders (over 16s) were selected from the Greater Accra Region from a mix of private and government secondary schools, colleges and universities to attend the seminar which was judged, among others, by Herbert Mensah, an avid entrepreneur and former CEO of Kumasi Asante Kotoko FC. These young leaders, in turn, educate their peers on leadership and entrepreneurship across the 50 schools.

Get Ghana Reading Campaign – This annual project was inaugurated by the Nobel Laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka, in Accra in June 2015. Run in collaboration with Ghana's biggest newspaper, the program trains a team of volunteers who visit and conduct reading laboratories within government schools.

Wellington Branch

Wellington leads New Zealand's youth engagement working with CYNZ (*Commonwealth Voices* September), running its 34th annual National Student CHOGM. Held in the Legislative Council Chamber of Parliament Buildings, Wellington, year 12 and 13 students from across New Zealand come together for two days to debate and interview, finally creating the outcome communiqué.

Students can apply for the role of Secretary-General to preside over and guide the debate between their peers during the conference. Students also make up a media delegation that creates press coverage for the Student CHOGM, interviews country delegations to challenge their points, and broadly keeps the delegates accountable.

4: The National Student Commonwealth Forum (NSCF)

5: Hong Kong Branch Young Fellows

6: CYNZ National Youth CHOGM 2015

7: Herbert Mensah and RCS Regional Co-ordinator, John Apea, meet a young leader

MORE INFORMATION
www.thercs.org/international-network

COMING UP IN THE COMMONWEALTH

15–18 DECEMBER 2015

Tenth WTO Ministerial Conference, Nairobi

17–20 JANUARY 2016

The Education World Forum, London

17 FEBRUARY 2016

Parliamentary Conference on the WTO (Inter-Parliamentary Union)

8 MARCH 2016

International Women's Day 2016

12–13 MARCH 2016

3rd Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Conference, London (CNMF and RCN)

14 MARCH 2016

Commonwealth Day 2016 and Celebration – An Inclusive Commonwealth, Westminster Abbey, (Council of Commonwealth Societies)

14–17 MARCH 2016

International Parliamentary Conference on Sustainability, Energy and Development, Westminster, (CPA UK)

14–24 MARCH 2016

60th Session of Commission on the Status of Women, UN Headquarters, New York

23–24 MARCH 2016

Commonwealth Cybersecurity Forum, London, (CTO)

6 APRIL 2016

International Day of Sport for Development and Peace (United Nations)

11–13 APRIL 2016

Commonwealth Journalists Association International Meeting, London

1 MAY 2016

Entry Deadline for 2016 The Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition (Royal Commonwealth Society)

12–15 MAY 2016

HM The Queen's 90th Birthday Celebration

MAY 2016 (TBC)

Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting (CHMM), Geneva

5 JUNE 2016

World Environment Day (United Nations)

18–25 JUNE 2016

Queen's Young Leaders' Residential Programme, London and Cambridge

Opening of nominations for Queen's Young Leaders Programme, 2017 (Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, Royal Commonwealth Society and Comic Relief)

KEEP IN THE CONVERSATION

 @TheRCSLondon

 /thercs

 @the_rcs

 LinkedIn.com



Commonwealth Journalists Association

Our mission is to promote independent, bold and ethical journalism.



- The Commonwealth Journalists Association (CJA) is an association of professional journalists created in 1978.
- Through our Commonwealth-wide family, we seek to protect journalists from physical and emotional abuse.
- The CJA family spans the Commonwealth and includes Bangladesh, Cameroon, Canada, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Uganda and the UK.

www.commonwealthjournalists.org



THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY

THE VALUE OF A LEGACY



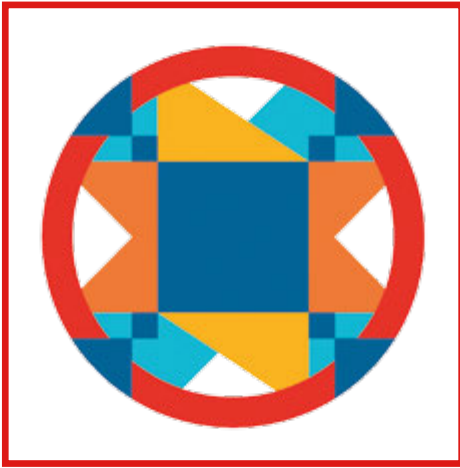
Leaving a legacy is an excellent way to help ensure the valuable work of The Royal Commonwealth Society continues well into the future.

www.thercs.org/support-the-rcs

Legacies provide a vital source of income, allowing us to plan and expand our work, as well as to fund longer-term projects. Remembering us in your will is a way of ensuring that we can further promote democracy and human rights within the Commonwealth through our youth and educational programmes, while we continue to highlight issues of gender equality, empowerment of women and girls, peace-making and sustainability through our advocacy.

HOW DO I LEAVE A LEGACY?

Including a legacy to The Royal Commonwealth Society in your will is straightforward. You can make a gift of a specific sum of money or a proportion of your residual estate; if you have already made a will you can add a codicil which we can supply, or see **'Support the RCS'** at www.thercs.org. Leaving a legacy to a charity such as the RCS can also be an effective way to reduce inheritance tax.



© Jeremy Wonnacott



© Commonwealth Secretariat



© Commonwealth Secretariat



© Commonwealth Secretariat

@TheRCSLondon facebook.com/thercs youtube.com/user/TheRCSociety



THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY

Award House, 7-11 St Matthew Street London SW1P 2JT
T: +44 (0)20 3727 4300 E: info@thercs.org www.thercs.org

Request a print copy

RCS Supporters can elect to receive a print copy free of charge, email info@thercs.org

Photography: where not specified, please refer to RCS



Editor: Hilary Greengrass
Design: RF Design UK Ltd
www.rfportfolio.com
Print: Impress Print Services Ltd
www.impressprint.net
Cover image: Cardamon
agroforestry © CFA
Registered charity in England and Wales
(226748), incorporated by Royal Charter.