



**Message
by
Commonwealth Secretary-General Kamallesh Sharma
on the
60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
10 December 2008**

10th December 2008 marks 60 years since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Commonwealth countries were involved in its drafting then, and they are involved in its implementation today.

There has long been a close relationship between the countries of the Commonwealth and the promotion of human rights.

The Declaration champions the links between human dignity and equal rights, and between freedom, justice and peace. It is a statement of principles, setting out ideals and aspirations for all countries.

As we in the Modern Commonwealth seek to bring this vision of a life of dignity to our almost 2 billion people, there is so much of our work which sees the Declaration turned into the Deeds of the first decade of the 21st Century.

The Declaration speaks ...

... to our Commonwealth work on the right to education,
... to our work on the right to freedom of opinion and expression,
... and to our work on the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of the individual, and of the family.

The Declaration enunciates so many of the principles at the heart of our Commonwealth democracy work.

It spells out the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty, and to participate in the government of one's country.

It establishes the right to work, and the principle of equal pay for equal work. Most fundamentally, it declares that 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights' – a principle at the heart of the Commonwealth.

It's through work in schools and colleges – and in the workplace, the court, the police station and the health clinic – that the most important impacts of human rights work are felt.

The Declaration reaches 60 years of age just as the Commonwealth approaches its own 60th anniversary.

On this day I salute the continued relevance and vision of the Declaration, and commit our collective and individual Commonwealth efforts to make real its aspirations.
