

12 August 2010
Pan Commonwealth Youth Caucus
International Youth Day message: “Our Year, Our Voice”

On November 29, 2009, Commonwealth Heads of Government committed to youth of the Commonwealth through a standalone Declaration, on *Investing in young people*. This Declaration acknowledged the role and active contributions of young people in promoting development, peace, democracy, and in protecting and promoting other Commonwealth values such as tolerance, respect and understanding. Heads recognised that the future success of the Commonwealth rested with the continued commitments and contributions to our young people.

Then, on 18 December 2009, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming the year commencing on 12 August 2010 as the **International Year of Youth (IYY): Dialogue and Mutual Understanding**. The theme reflects the importance of dialogue among youth from different cultures, generations and economic background and the need for breakthrough thinking by stakeholders to empathically integrate youth in the decision making process through youth mainstreaming.

The two actions signal to the youth of our generation, that each generation goes further than the generation preceding it because it stands on the shoulders of that generation. *THIS IS OUR TIME*. Let us light a fire for youth advocacy in the world that has been long forgotten. A fire that will stir the hearts of our national and world leaders on the issues that challenge our day: on youth employment, climate change, democracy, economic development, health and education. Let youth leaders, student leaders, youth advocates, youth activists and youth volunteers rekindle the passion and commitment to development, peace and democracy that will contribute to making the world a better place.

As we celebrate the rebirth of the youth voice, let us seek solutions to unlock young people’s potential, energy, imagination and initiatives that should drive their crucial contributions to enhancing peace and development. We encourage stakeholders to acknowledge the objectives of IYY and work together to ensure that policies and processes are in place to increase investment in youth, to increase youth participation and partnerships, and to increase intercultural understanding among youth. We, the young people need governments, private sector businesses, youth serving and civil society organizations and other stakeholders to work with us in our drive to develop a sustainable future.

The world needs to see young people as a resource. Young people are the most precious resource our planet possesses. Engaging youth is not just a moral obligation; it is a compelling economic necessity. Study after study has shown the benefits to communities of investing in education, reproductive health, job skills and employment opportunities for young people.

In the commemoration of the IYY, the Commonwealth has reiterated its commitment towards making youth the centre of democracy and development. As young people of the Commonwealth, we believe the time is right for youth to be fully engaged in the Commonwealth and we hope to set the ground work for the principles that will shape the future of the Commonwealth over the course of this year.

Lets us not forget that genuine youth participation gives ... ‘young people the power to shape both the process and the outcome’. The world needs us, our ideas and our voice, the difference between the world of today and our world tomorrow rests with us, the young people. Let us work to make this year long remembered in the history of the world...let us remember the words of Baraka Obama...***“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek”.***

This is our year; let us raise our voices and make a positive difference in our world.