

## ***The Commonwealth – the Way Forward***

### **Opening remarks**

Thank you very much, David, for that summary. For a person at my stage of life, the only trouble is that at some point you start to get the suspicion that it is starting to read like an obituary. But I am not there yet! It is true that I came here in this condition, but I hope to be able to pull through. However, if I speak on occasion like this, I am reminded of what my house-master told me, which is that whenever you inflict yourself upon an audience, make sure that they go away thinking it was worth their time and bus fare. I am not sure whether I will be able to do that, but it is not the first time I am standing here, as you recall. I have been here before, as High Commissioner, and I spoke on the Commonwealth on that occasion, too. I do not know what test you have, but obviously I passed it.

I am delighted to be here because it will very shortly be the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Commonwealth. You are old friends, we know each other from the olden times working with the British Council. The RCS, I was told, is 140 years old. We know it from the Observance at Westminster Abbey on Commonwealth Day, from its Commonwealth Vision Awards, from its lively debating. So there is no place where I would rather come and disseminate some of my ideas, than here. Yesterday it was six months to the day that I joined as SG. I am absolutely astonished. It is like somebody has pressed the fast-forward button on and got me through something that might normally have taken a couple of years.

I have done five Ministerial Meetings - youth, health, law, sports and foreign affairs – with finance to come next week. I have done Executive Committees, Boards of Governors, I have done Commonwealth associations, CPA, the I have been to summits of the SADC, the CARICOM and the Pacific. I have done two CMAGs, one to admit Pakistan back, another one, still in limbo, to deal with the Fiji issue, which was our topic in New York. We did one mini-summit of Heads of Government here, which I was told had never been done before on a global issue. There was one Sonny Ramphal did in 1984 on South Africa, as I recall, but not on a global issue. Then we did an Extraordinary Special Summit just now for leaders, and a good 25 of the heads came, in New York just now, which I was again surprised to learn had never been done before. If I had known that before, maybe I would have been more intimidated before I got started, but it was very engaged. We spoke about the Millennium Development Goals, food security and the reform of international institutions, and we got a very good steer from them, particularly on the reform of international institutions. I have also been to Kenya, Mauritius, Maldives and Swaziland, travelled across five continents, including the

Food Summit in Rome, so I do not feel that I have been in the job for just six months. It really feels like a lot longer.

I have found out something in all this. The problem I had when I spoke here first was, 'What can I put in when I speak?' The problem now is, 'What can I leave out?' because so many impressions come crowding in upon you. Let me see how quickly I can go through it. One of the down-sides of being ill for three days has meant that while I was able to scribble the notes of I wanted to share with you, I have not had time to condense them, so I will have to do this condensation as I go along.

## **Strengths of the Commonwealth**

### *Old strengths*

The first point I want to make is that some of the strengths of the Commonwealth, looking forward, are really strengths which the Commonwealth does not need to rediscover. These are in fact old strengths, which is what makes it possible for the Commonwealth to be a future-orientated organisation. I believe that it was the one organisation which introduced the idea of an international community in global affairs. I think before the war, the idea of an international community did not exist. There were colonies, there were great powers and so on, but the idea of an international community with common things to do and to reflect on simply did not exist. The conscious step when it was taken was stepping out from the old world into the new, and Nehru had a lot to do with that, because some of the explanations he gave were very simple explanations to the parliament. He said, 'If an opportunity is arising whereby we can meet from different parts of the world and talk, why should we repudiate that? Where is the sense in that?' He believed a lot in talk, and I certainly feel that any action which is not preceded by talk is one should be very careful about. We have maintained that enthusiasm, as an organisation, being joined willingly by people who have consciously crossed over from an older era into a new era. This is a perennial strength of the Commonwealth, and this idea that we are an international community once again is very badly needed to be nurtured among us. There is talk and evidence of all kinds of cultural conflicts and political conflicts, and the idea that you are in it together is something which is our strength.

### *Inclusiveness*

The other is inclusiveness. This has, of course, become the core strength of our organisation. It is hard to think of an organisation (in fact, I cannot) which has the representative range of the global community which we have in more than 50 states, in different stages of development, different types of states, landlocked and island states, sizes from a mega population in a state like India to places like Nauru and Tuvalu with about 10,000. We have diversity in location, on all five continents, with all peoples represented, all faiths represented: it is therefore a microcosm and template of the world in a way which no other organisation is. You can be powerful; I have always said that if an organisation which is powerful

like Europe were to present an idea to the world, it would probably have less legs to travel than an idea presented by the Commonwealth because of all those that were involved in making it in the first place. Therefore, what we do should have a global resonance. Inclusiveness once again is the aspiration of modern times and therefore we start from an inherited strength in order to be able to chart the course in the future.

### *Small states*

We all know that our grand strength really revolves around the voice and equality which we have given to the small states. This was not always emphasised because when Cyprus was ready to enter in the early 1960s, I think 1962, this was debated, 'What kind of organisation is it going to become?' Because the feeling at that point was still that you needed countries of a certain size to become an organisation of a certain weight. However, this was very soon dismissed because the logic was that whoever wants to join, with the background they have, they must be welcomed warmly. And they were, and so we are now, and we have demonstrated ourselves as the voice for small states. And, once again, in the world we are entering, this is going to be an asset which is going to be very, very badly needed because we do not want a world where there is talk only of emerging economies, where there is talk of emerging and big players, talk of winners and losers. When I was dragged before the cameras, as soon as I won the election at CHOGM in Kampala last November, I saw Don McKinnon walking towards me, and he said, 'Now everyone wants to have a look at your face,' and there were 100 cameras, I was a bit like a rabbit caught in the headlights. It was completely unrehearsed, I had prepared nothing and the words that came out of me were, 'The Commonwealth is a great global good.' Since I had not prepared it, I suppose I meant it in my soul. The other thing which I said was that because this is what it is, we must ensure that the Commonwealth is not a boutique organisation, also an unrehearsed expression. I just meant I wanted it to become an impartial organisation in the work that it does. However, in the later session of the Executive Committee at CHOGM, I did say, when I had more time to reflect, that in respect of our endowment and populations, every single human community and settlement in the world has a right to national salvation and to a place in the sun, and I think this ethos is exemplified most by the Commonwealth of all organisations.

## **The three Gs**

### *Globalism*

I am looking forward. We have had, traditionally, two Ds in the Commonwealth – Democracy and Development. I try and amplify them by talking of the three Gs, which are Globalism, Governance and Growth. Globalism, because 'global' is a mindset; 'globalisation' is a phenomenon. Globalism tells you that you are a world citizen and you must act like one. It reflects the wisdom of Ubuntu, which is, 'I am, because you are, because we are.' I think that we are equipped to give, as it were, products which in the world today will be seen as globalist products

because while everything is now being globalised, from factories and production, civil society and disease, we can count them all, what we require is a globalisation of collective wisdom and I think that the globalist view the Commonwealth can forge, because of what it is, templates and ideas, the force of ideas which can generate which will be deceptive in the world.

### *Governance*

The other idea concerns governance. Something very important has happened since the Cold War in the last 50 or 60 years, which is an idea that what you are as a state, what you are as a people, is not something that can be conferred by anyone from outside you. In his latest book by Joe Nye, my old friend from Harvard, says that if perestroika and glasnost had not happened then he thinks the Soviet Union had 10 years left anyway; it was nothing to do with Reagan's defence policies or Star Wars. It was not as if he was not ready for the armament policies of America, they were just not ready for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the Cold War, a lot of the developing world had these counters that they will be looked after because of the polarisation of the world, one way or the other. That also has fallen away. We know that societies if they do not develop intrinsic strengths amongst themselves, tend to hollow themselves out. There is no such thing as a static society. You have to be on the move all the time.

The Commonwealth has always given emphasis to intrinsic strengths in its governance programmes. In my tours, I have always seen the trust with which I am able to speak to the Heads because the Heads know that he is a well-wisher who wants to help me develop these intrinsic strengths. He is not interested in grandstanding, he is not interested in taking credit or giving leaks to the media to make himself look good. This is the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth. I doubt there are many heads of organisations who would be able to talk in that spirit with so many leaders.

This we can do by the self-efficacy theory. We do not take enough credit for it. The self-efficacy theory in social theory says that if you give me an example then many other people can follow, it is very simple. There is a lot of jargon connected with it. It is because of what we were able to do, I think, by way of governance in our governance practices, starting from Singapore, Harare, Millbrook, Latimer House, Aberdeen and so on, over 30 or 40 years, talking the talk and walking the walk as well, that it was possible to have NEPAD, it was possible to have the peer review mechanism in Africa, it was possible to have the principles in the Pacific. This is what we have been able to do by setting the example of do-ability. I think that in the time to come, the work which we do in governance, and this work is now increasing, we have a Pacific governance plan, we have an Africa governance plan, which we are doing together with others. We, at the request of our own public administration ministers a year ago, are developing a new conceptual framework to achieve governance across the Commonwealth on common principles, useful for needs assessment, project approval, programme evaluation, partnership opportunities. The next steps are

to develop indicators of good governance, and an implementation strategy. The five principles that we will cover are accountability, transparency, predictability, capacity and participativeness. I think this is a strength, the need for which is going to grow in the world today, and the Commonwealth has demonstrated a lead in it.

### *Growth*

I say growth rather than development now because those of you who have seen the Growth Commission report, which Michael Spence, Nobel laureate, chaired. I met him when he released it here and he said, 'We have studied about 17 or 18 developing countries which have grown at more than 7% for 20 or 25 years, to find out what was common, because that would then be a great template for everyone else: 'that is what we need to do.' To their embarrassment, they said they could not find a single one, the economic policies were so different, except for one 'invisible', which is the determination to get out of where they were. This was consistent. The other constant was that everyone invested in health and in education.

Your social agenda and growth are joined at the hip. It is an error to talk about growth or development or the Millennium Development Goals as if they were not all in one basket, and inter-dependent. Without growth, without the creation of resources, it is very difficult for societies in terms of sustainability and durability, which is why I would also like to emphasise science more than it is being done (we used to have a science body, earlier) because the era of appropriate technology is now gone. You need the digital bridge to span the development divide. All your solutions which come now are based on advanced technology. ICT penetration now is the secret of what you can do for health through e-health, through e-education, for learning through e-learning, for commerce through e-commerce and for governance through e-governance. I think that we in the Commonwealth should be taking bolder steps towards this and we have the Commonwealth Connects programme in which we hope to be able to do it.

### **Contributions we can make**

What are the contributions I feel we can make in our times? This is a period of churning. The president of a famous American university, in fact Harvard, at Davos a couple of years ago, made the following observation. He said, 'What is happening around us now is more significant than what happened at the time of the Industrial Revolution or the Reformation.' Nobody listening to him felt this was unwarranted hyperbole; everybody sensed that it is because we are embedded in these processes now that we are not able to sense it, but surely there is more than a germ of truth in what he is saying. The markers that we had, which is North and South, which we thought would persist through our working lives in the field of economics, and East and West, which we thought would persist with us in the field of politics, have vanished before our eyes. Therefore, in this compacting world, we are seeing symptoms both of integration as well as of collision, and I think a body like the Commonwealth can identify

where it can add value where there is integration, and where it can apply a balm where there is evidence of collision. Therefore, we can contribute in the time to come to contain the quotient of cultural strife. This whole debate was started in Huntington's book, but there is another recipe which Amartya Sen in his *Civil Paths to Peace* spoke about, which is to say that we, normally speaking, enjoy a depth of personality which gives us multiple identities, but if we get tied into a monochrome identity which is based on our faith, then what kind of a dialogue is it going to be?

How is all this polarisation mediated? What does education do, what does the media do, what does the youth sector do, what do women do? Therefore it is a much more complex subject and I think this subject is something which the Commonwealth, for the reasons which I have already mentioned, is supremely equipped to advance the philosophy of.

### **Institution nurturing**

Then the promotion of intrinsic values, the idea that you have intrinsic values whereby you live and you sustain yourself, which I have already mentioned, is something which we have to advance now through institution nurturing. It is extremely important for us to identify which are pivotal institutions in our public life; I for instance believe that an election commission is one of them. If you see the political breakdowns that are taking place, the big ones in the recent past, they happened when the transfer of power brought the shove to the push. The institution which is supposed to absorb it and deliver this transformation was not able to do it.

I think the Commonwealth should be particularly engaged in developing both the culture as well as the institutional forum, and a group of election commissioners who would support each other, who would work on standards cutting across each one of them, who would observe each others' elections and create a new culture altogether.

### **Population groups**

#### *Women*

Humane and equitable globalisation is something which I have already mentioned. Two population groups, if you like, are extremely important. I have a bias and I declare this interest: I think women are the stronger, the more resilient, more value centred and instinctively the more humanising gender. I have always believed it throughout my life, and I think that the Commonwealth should be advancing this work as much as it can; I am going to take a personal interest in it. Quite apart from this belief of mine, I think if there is a silver bullet or a litmus test in the armoury of development today, it is how well the women are doing, because if the women are doing well then the rest of your system is doing well as well. But if lots of spots in your system are doing well but not the women, then obviously you have not got it right.

### *Youth*

The youth is another one: a neglected, patronised section of the population, which is a bit of a mystery because it is the youth who are going to inherit the whole of the century, it is the youth who are going to do something about the mess which we as adults have created, so why should we simply say here is a Youth Ministry, for instance, or a youth department? We have a word called mainstream and I was told by my media advisor never to use the word 'mainstreaming', but you have to mainstream women and you have to mainstream youth in every work that your society does. There is a cultural revolution which is taking place, and this is, that the passage of time does not always give you wisdom anymore. I still give an example that at my age, when I was 30 which is a really long time ago now, if I had to look for somebody who could solve a problem for me, I looked for someone older than me. Somebody who is 30 today would probably have to look for someone younger than them. It is not just that they have more skills than you have and they are more adapted to the 21st century. I find talking to my own children, very often they have more wisdom as well.

### *Jobseekers*

It baffles me that we cannot get over the cultural habit of creating a society of jobseekers. We know that through colleges, out of 100 about 20 people are going to get jobs. What is our policy towards the rest? Now if you want a policy which is consistent and coherent it will have to enter the pedagogy: what are they taught of who they are? Are they being inculcated with the self confidence that they can be somebody, they can be social entrepreneurs, they can be professionals? They can be economic entrepreneurs but tell them, 'You are not job seekers, you are not learning good English phrases so you can write spotless English. You are independent, young citizens of this country. The future is in your hands, and we are going to help you'. Trade and economic bodies have to do the mentoring, and this is where the remote connects with the distant. International institutions, financial institutions have to help out, creating the instruments and taking that amount of risk to make it possible for these people to start with themselves. I think that youth entrepreneurship is something which the Commonwealth should be doing a lot more of.

### **Shared momentum**

We have strengths in the Commonwealth: equality of debate, ownership of decisions and a comprehensive network of stakeholders. We were before the rest of the world in this. The civil society of the Commonwealth emerged before the Commonwealth Secretariat. We have the work of the Commonwealth Foundation, the Commonwealth Business Council. Alongside the CHOGM, we have parallel youth and peoples' events. All of this means that we have got something right, which is that people as a whole move in the right direction.

Governments move, everybody else moves, the momentum has to be a shared one, stakeholders have to be universal.

## **Concluding remarks**

### *Global products and solutions*

Some conclusions have to be drawn: for a future orientation we have to recognise that you need a conscious global interface. So far what we have done, for instance in highly indebted poor countries, or our debt-management programmes, or our health-worker recruitment protocol, or youth trainers and many others, it has been, as it were, 'globalisation by accident'. We had a good idea and it had the potential to become globalised. I think you now have to consciously look at the world we are in and ask how we are going to do it consciously. It is instructive that the three mandates we got at the last Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) – the Lake Victoria Environment Plan, the Munyonyo Declaration on Respect and Understanding, the Reform of International Institutions – all of them involve the rest of the world. If you want to do it seriously you cannot do it within the fifty-odd countries of the Commonwealth; this is a global product and a global solution we are talking about.

### *The Commonwealth's argument*

Therefore on our current activism, shortly after I took over we did what I think was a highly successful mini-summit of Heads of Government which was chaired by Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who kindly accepted to do it because it was very important that he did it, in which we said that we have now, because inclusiveness is the culture of the Commonwealth, to argue that in order to reform the World Bank and the IMF, you need an inclusive approach. It is your argument: it is the Commonwealth's argument. We are not trying to prejudge the outcome, but we are saying that if the processes of this nature are truncated or institute-limited, you will not have the output and the outcome which will make any sense in the world today.

We have in the paper – some of you may have seen it – some of the feedback we got as to what they would like to see, but we have not judged it, we have simply parked it there. The result we got then was endorsed last week in New York where 53 Heads of State and Government endorsed this process. In St Lucia this coming weekend at the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting, we will try and work the road map of how to go ahead.

### *Responsibilities*

Then we also have to reflect on the expanding range of our options in respect of outreach. We have to think of new instruments now. If you are thinking in this way of your responsibilities, then you cannot also at the same time be thinking about simply asking member states to give some more money so you can have some more budget to play around with. There is a disconnect between the

opportunities that are being offered to you, if you keep on thinking like this. Therefore the two ideas which I have been advancing – I have now done it with the Executive Committee – one is what we are calling the Partnership Platform Portal, but it could end up as anything. Basically the concept is to let us recognise what we can do to our budget is the tip of the iceberg and that the partnership potential is latent, lying untapped all over the world within our membership and outside it. There are any number of global world citizens concerned about the world, wanting to get places, who are prepared to be your partners, so why do we not create a site which is designed in a way that it has about 16 or 17 windows, which are all listed already, from renewable technology, to skills development, to a farmers' forum, to best practices, or whatever you are doing? As I said there is no better way of advancing, I think, in development than to demonstrate that this has worked somewhere else. However we do not even have a knowledge grid of what is working elsewhere.

#### *The age of communications*

I do not want to take up your time because on this I have spoken just to this team for very long periods, but I think the time has now come for us to think of the instrumentalities which the age of communications make available for you, and to use them to the advantage of our membership. I see it as a one-stop shop: once you have entered that domain you do not really have to exit it, no matter what you want, because even the conventional development agencies – whether here or in Australia or in Singapore, or elsewhere – can log on. Whatever you are searching for there will be links. We are not offering all of the services, but we are showing you this is what we offer, this is what you are looking for. It is like when you order a book on Amazon, 'If you read this, others who have ordered this book also ordered the following'. Address your mind: you do not have to leave the site. I think this will be a great global contribution which the Commonwealth can make.

And then there are the strategic partnerships. I know that I have to go cautiously here. We are not looking for money. We are looking for people who share our values, who are prepared to work with us in advancing our values. The fact that they can also finance a joint project comes only second. There are many such entities outside and I think we should be leveraging ourselves. There are many examples of successful conversations which I myself have had with people, which make it absolutely plain that if you had a conscious policy of probing where you can leverage your strengths, you can have partnerships which are not a zero-sum game, which do not deprive you of oxygen, but make your product stronger and more global.

#### *Institutional makeover*

There is also the need for some institutional makeover in the Commonwealth. This is something I have to discuss with my own governors, with the member states, with my own team. I have given some ideas and we will be working on that, so that the Commonwealth in the time to come is a voice for coherent

development, for developing intrinsic strengths, advancing the idea of equity, for reaffirming the idea of equality of states, for demonstrating what a debating forum of equals can do, and how it can contribute to global harmony both through invisibles and through visibles.

### *The fox and the hedgehog*

In conclusion, I read somewhere that a philosopher in Greece in the 5th century BC made the following observation. He said that the fox, who was always ferreting around, running around, nosing his way and always on the move, knows many, many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing. He does not have to move; he has found that one big thing. I hope that in the time to come the Commonwealth will be both a fox and a hedgehog, capable of handling big ideas and allowing those ideas to dictate the micromanagement which we do as an organisation.

### *The 60th anniversary*

The 60th anniversary is coming up next year. The Commonwealth is not retiring, it is starting again. That is why we have, as you may have seen, a theme for the year: 'thecommonwealth@60 – serving a new generation'. It is my hope that in this 60th anniversary we will also be able to welcome Zimbabwe. A few days after I came, I gave an interview in which I said 'I start with the confidence that Zimbabwe will want to rejoin.' I also have the belief that the members will welcome that. As to what it takes, it is not a mystery: these are called the Harare Principles. Shortly before the runoff in the breakdown there, I had made a statement in which I drew a further distinction, which was that whether you are in an organisation or out of it, is a political decision for you. However, if you subscribe to the Harare Principles, then it is a conscious, ethical, moral, political choice that you have made. You put yourself on an irreducible platform which ensures a concern and a commitment to the will of the citizens which cannot be compromised. I said, 'I urge the government of Zimbabwe to act in that spirit' and, standing here, I would still urge them to do it.

Thank you very much.

**ENDS**