



# Peterhouse Lecture

Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2009

## Welcome

Alison Richard

*Vice Chancellor, Cambridge University*

### **Introductory remarks**

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and honoured guests. On May 27<sup>th</sup> last year, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales unveiled a plaque in the Commonwealth Room in the University Library to mark the relocation to Cambridge of the Royal Commonwealth Society Library, now held at the UL. The RCS library had been moved to Cambridge after a fundraising appeal, of which Prince Charles had been patron, to save it for the nation. It was a great celebration that day, and I know that some of you were there. It certainly affirmed for me the very strong loyalty and affection felt for the Commonwealth.

On that day, I met Sir Peter Marshall, who had been Chairman of the Royal Commonwealth Society and later Chairman of the Joint Commonwealth Societies' Council. He took me off in the library and suggested to me that Cambridge should find a way to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the London Declaration and the close links between Cambridge and the Commonwealth. I pay tribute to Sir Peter now for that excellent notion.

This afternoon gives us an opportunity to mark the achievements of the Commonwealth, a voluntary membership organisation whose contribution to international stability and development is quite remarkable. The Commonwealth makes an explicit commitment to peace, to liberty and to democracy. It encourages sustainable development and education, combats poverty, and promotes the values of respect for all races and faiths, of support for the weak, and humility in the strong. Sixty years ago, on the 27<sup>th</sup> April 1949, the London Declaration affirmed that new republics, such as India, had a valued place in the Commonwealth. In doing so, it reformed the old club of British colonial possessions, saved it from irrelevancy, and gave it a new constitution and purpose.

### **The University of Cambridge and the Commonwealth**

As I have remarked, the University of Cambridge and the Commonwealth are closely bound, both in our history and in the values we share. Cambridge has welcomed students from Commonwealth countries for well over 100 years. Some of them went on to shape their countries: I might name Pandit Nehru of India, Tunku Abdul Rahman of Malaysia and Jan Christiaan Smuts of South Africa. In the early 1980s, the flow to the UK of overseas talent stuttered, as overseas students at UK universities were required to pay the full cost of tuition. Cambridge, however, responded decisively by establishing in 1982 the Cambridge Commonwealth Trust, under the chairmanship of the Prince of Wales, with a remit to provide scholarships for students from Commonwealth countries, who would otherwise not be able to afford the new fee. Today, 853 Commonwealth students in residence in Cambridge receive support from the Cambridge Commonwealth Trust, and since its foundation it has supported over 8,500 students in their studies in this corner of Eastern England.

Our links do not stop there. In many academic disciplines, from the Department of Plant Sciences to the Faculty of English, from Clinical Medicine to Architecture, there are academics whose research is pursued in Commonwealth countries, and of course our scholars also study the operation and history of the Commonwealth itself. The Commonwealth is pervasive indeed.

### **India and the Commonwealth**

It is impossible to imagine a strong Commonwealth without the presence among its membership of the Republic of India. It is fitting, moreover, that the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth in this anniversary year should be Indian. Kamalesh Sharma is no stranger to Cambridge: he came to Cambridge from St Stephen's College in Delhi to read English at King's College, making the journey that many of his fellow countrymen and women have made. He returned to the UK as India's High Commissioner in London, and promoted to the Indian Government the idea of funding the Nehru Professorship of Indian Business and Enterprise, to be held at Judge Business School.

There is no question in my mind that that position would never have come into being without the leadership, the vision, the nudging and the support that the High Commissioner gave us at every step of the way. I am happy to say that, just last week, the Cambridge Centre for India and Global Business, of which the Nehru Professor is also the Director, was launched in India. As High Commissioner, Mr Sharma was also our valued partner in arranging the memorable visit to Cambridge in 2006 of Dr Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India and a Cambridge alumnus, who received an honorary doctorate. Mr Sharma was elected as Secretary-General of the Commonwealth in April 2008. While we miss you in your former role as High Commissioner, we are delighted to welcome you back in your new role as Secretary-General of the Commonwealth and we are most grateful that you will be addressing us this afternoon on Global Transformation and Challenge. I am happy to say at the outset that Mr Sharma has already agreed to take questions at the end of his lecture. Thank you very much, and welcome.

## **Global Transformation and Challenge**

Kamalesh Sharma

*Commonwealth Secretary-General*

### **Introductory remarks**

Thank you very much, Vice Chancellor, for your warm welcome. It is also one of the very few occasions when the microphone does not have to be adjusted for my centre of gravity, which is extremely progressive! You saw me off sumptuously when I was leaving London, and now you invite me back handsomely again. I am very grateful for that. I am always very happy to come to Cambridge; perhaps that has something to do with the fact that a criminal is always drawn to the scene of his crimes. I try to relive those years I was here, which were so transformative for me. I could not imagine then, that I would be standing here and speaking to any kind of audience, and least of all that anyone would be interested in what I have to say!

**An overlap between Cambridge and the Commonwealth**

We do have, I believe, a big overlap between Cambridge and the Commonwealth. You are celebrating your 800<sup>th</sup> year and the Commonwealth is celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> year. I would like to think that your motto, *Hinc Lucem Et Pocula Sacra*, which loosely translates 'From this place, you will gain enlightenment and precious knowledge', applies to both of us. We like to think that the Commonwealth also is a body of knowledge workers, and hopefully contributes to the globalisation of wisdom. For that matter, Cambridge could adopt our motto for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, which is 'serving a new generation'.

You have already mentioned the Cambridge Commonwealth Trust and we have a very full scholarship and fellowship programme. I was myself a Commonwealth Scholar from King's College, so I feel that this idea of the Commonwealth Scholarship is indeed a very important one.

There have been connections between the Cambridge Centre of Education and the Commonwealth Education Trust, the entire library of the Royal Commonwealth Society came to this university, and the work which Trinity College is doing with Commonwealth Election Commissions is one of the most important institution-building exercises in which we are involved.

I think there is a larger overlap, however. We are both global organisations of values. We understand the centrality of the ideas of relevance, modernity, excellence, diversity, and securing the future. The Commonwealth has a special commitment to education, through its engagement in advancing primary and secondary education, its tri-annual meetings of the education ministers (the next one is in Kuala Lumpur in June), and its scope to include the Vice Chancellor's Forum (it would be excellent if we could see you there), the Stakeholders' Forum, the Youth Forum, the Teachers' Forum, and the Senior Officials' Forum. The Education Ministers' meetings of the Commonwealth are the most expansive, and the largest, of many ministerial meetings that we have.

**The power and centrality of context**

The truth is, though, that no institution today has a divine right to exist - although Cambridge with 800 years, and Peterhouse as the first college, come pretty close. If wisdom is gained through the passage of time, then Cambridge would be dripping with it. The Commonwealth has to work a little harder to persuade the world of its relevance, but no institution is spared the task of justifying its existence today: not the UN, not the World Bank, not the IMF, not the World Trade Organisation, or any other in this rapidly transforming world. Recently, I have been reading, Vice Chancellor, a few addresses that you have given, and I would like to cite what you said about 'processes of making and unmaking cultural patterns of understanding and possessing history', and also creating patterns particular to a time in society. These hint at the power and centrality of context. No institution can be divorced from it, and the mere recital of the activities of an institution is not enough. Hence my title, which does not contain the word Commonwealth.

The President of Harvard recently, in Davos, made the following observation to a large audience. He said that the processes of alteration, which we see around us in every way, will be seen in hindsight to have been more significant than either the Industrial Revolution or the Reformation. This sounded like a very tall claim for what is going on in the world, but I think nobody in the audience thought it was unwarranted hyperbole. Even though we are embedded in this process of transformation, most people sense that this is the making of mankind's history in this century. What could be more determining of our future? The questions which are posed before us are, in many senses, existential questions. The way that we answer them will determine how we will survive.

As someone observed, this century is unique in one way: the problems it has before it are not amenable to be transferred for solution to another century. In previous centuries it could be said that the processes of historical change were such that you could catch up, but not any longer. I just want to touch on some of these processes and what they are.

### **Processes of historical change**

#### *East and West*

The most remarkable ones in my working career: I never thought that some of the polarities which determined the world of my time would go away significantly in my lifetime. One of these was the East-West polarity. One always thought that, if it were to change, it would change at a glacial pace. These two huge superpowers would come to adjust to each other over decades, and that is how the history of the 21<sup>st</sup> century would be determined.

The change came in a flash, overnight, in terms of history. The significance of the change has been commented upon by many people. One of the comments I read recently was by Joseph Nye, who in his book on leadership said that the Soviet Union did not disappear because it was not equal to the US, or because it was not ready for the investment and armaments of the Reagan administration, or because it was not ready for Star Wars. It went because it was not ready for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and once Perestroika and Glasnost were set in motion in that society, it was only a question of time. What he was trying to say was that, if you choose to make yourself into a dinosaur, you must worry about a change in climate.

We are still gripped by talking about polarities; it has become a habit. Bi-polarity; one superpower goes, unipolarity; and, now the unipolar moment has come and gone, we are in a multi-polar world. Recently, an article in *Foreign Affairs* suggested that perhaps we are in a non-polar world. The question now is not so much who is presiding over the world, but what the nature of the world is over which you are presiding. There are 50 chronically fragile states, many of them already described as close to failed states. The idea of sustainability, and political sustainability in the world, has undergone a complete revolution. I never thought that we would be addressing such a radical alteration so quickly in our lives.

#### *North and South*

There was another polarity in our lives: North and South. I would not have thought that, in my lifetime, I would see this evaporate so quickly. In the end, it was perhaps a geographical idea, but we have seen with the emerging economies and with the fact that billions have entered the

global market economy, that, as a CEO of an American company said, the word 'multinational' must be taken out of your head: you now have to have virtual multinationals, and we have to touch upon capacities. North is no longer geography. North is now an ability.

The significance of this is that we have to get used to looking at this transformation, not through inherited structures of meaning or legacy thought processes. All meaning, all developments, are filtered through an assumption that the world is of a certain nature. We see that if these four directions – North, South, East and West - can vanish before our eyes so rapidly, the whole framework of meaning in which we see the world must be radically reassessed.

### Global Society

The nature of global society now, with its population, its migrations (people desperate enough to get into boats, whether from Africa to Europe, or from one part of East Asia to more affluent societies, and risk their lives) lays a cultural collision before us. We talk of a globalising world: I think it might be better described as a compacting world. A compacting world is integrating in some parts, but colliding in others. The globalisation which is taking place is globalisation both of that which is wholesome, and that which is unwholesome; that which constitutes part of our civil society, as well as part of our uncivil society. The global society today, therefore, poses a society which no longer possesses the rigid borders of political and social communities that we have become used to in the centuries past.

### *Technology*

What is the role of technology? I never thought that there would be a time when technology would have to be seen as a human resource, applicable equally to the challenge of all societies, and perhaps more to the challenge of developing societies. This was because I grew up with the idea that there is an appropriate technology, which belongs to the South at their level of development, and an advanced industrial technology which belongs to the affluent world. Yet not only is there death of time, but death of distance too. International telephony today is one tenth of the price of what it was twenty years ago. Cross-border calls have increased four times since 1991.

A young mind today, sitting in the South, need not see itself in a parochial or limited way: it knows that, with a laptop, it can log on to the world. The first country to succeed in the policy of one laptop per child is a small Commonwealth state in the Pacific called Niue. I was talking to the Prime Minister, and he said that this intervention of technology was the biggest egalitarian intervention which could be made politically. One person or one young mind with a laptop, connected with the world, sees everyone around them as 'you and your laptop', 'me and my laptop', and the world around us. Social differences, and other differences, according to the Prime Minister, can be overcome in his society by this very simple device. The cascading connectivity in the world, with young minds logged into the world, and the velocity with which technology is travelling, suddenly makes available to us the opportunity to bridge digitally the development divide.

When we talk of solutions to development problems, we can no longer talk of them in the old way. If you were to put every child in primary school in Africa successfully, you would need five million teachers to teach them. The solutions are simply not available in conventional ways. Therefore, you have e-health, e-education, e-commerce, e-governance, and everything which is a solution is based on technology.

We got someone to talk to us in the Commonwealth about what the significance of all this might be for our association. I want to cite what was on their slide and they gave sources for it. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we saw more progress in technology than in the nine centuries preceding it. In the first twenty years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we saw more advancement than in all of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We will not experience one hundred years of progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: it will be more like 20,000 years of progress at the current rate. They then had the following, which I do not quite understand, except that it sounds extremely scary: we will achieve one human brain capability for \$1,000 around the year 2023. We will achieve one human brain capability for 1 cent around in the year 2027. We will achieve one human race capability for \$1,000 around the year 2049. We will achieve one human race capability for one cent around the year 2059. I am not sure what this means – ‘one cent of human race capability’! – but what I think he is trying to say is that our minds today cannot comprehend or conceive of what the world will be like at that point in time.

The advancement of technology in this way has presented to us questions of regulation and of ethics. I see it, however, as an opportunity which should be consciously utilised to overcome, not only the advanced global problems of the world, but also the development problems.

#### *Non-state actors*

The other aspect of these severe transformations is the role of non-state actors. I have mentioned that human communities with rigid borders were a thing of the past for one set of reasons, but there is another set of reasons. No government of the world can now pretend that they are in complete control of events, or that they can dictate the direction or the pace of events. What they must attend to politically is determined significantly by what the media, an independent global force, chooses to do; we call it sometimes ‘the CNN effect’. What political, economic or social crisis they might face need no longer be an inter-state crisis: it can be the speed with which people put in, and withdraw, the money they have invested. You have seen the consequences of this in many ways for the money managers of the world. There are then groups that have the globe as their stage – the terrorist groups, at one end of the spectrum.

There is a globalisation of operations of virtually all actors in the world today, and the state finds itself as only one of the actors.

#### *The environment*

The case of the environment is self-evident – or should be, by now. I often cite a sentence I read in James Martin’s book, *The Meaning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, which sent a chill down my spine when I read it. There has to be an explanation for the assiduousness and single-mindedness with which humankind is degrading and destroying the only environment it possesses. There is no rational explanation for this. Even after the science is available, the pace at which the world

is responding is such as seems to indicate a lacuna in our minds. Martin states, that 'it can perhaps only be explained by the surmise that perhaps humankind as a species is losing the instinct for self-preservation'. James Lovelock's book, *The Vanishing Face of Gaia*, says that we have reached a point where we should see the situation from the point of view of the earth, and not only our point of view, with which we are obsessed: that the human race is a kind of unwanted virus on the face of the earth. His book is about the irreversibility about what has already happened; he thinks that there are already too many people in the world. He thinks we are living in a dream world if we think much of this can be seriously reversed, or that there can be damage limitation. This is a threat with which the whole world is gripped, and, in a very - as usual - unfair way. Countries with absolutely no carbon footprint are the first to be affected. A President of a Commonwealth Pacific State recently said, in a sustainable development conference, 'I have an island for sale, if anyone is interested, because I cannot live on it'. The contribution to global warming of this country is absolutely zero. There is no activity of this state which can remotely contribute to it.

We have not even made a start on the question of global environmental governance. We have 500 separate agreements: some of them are good, no doubt. We have not come to grips with it, as yet, as a human community.

#### *Global governance*

There is the disintegrating global governance environment, obviously created for a world which is disappearing. It seems that we are sitting in the rubble of an older world, which is giving way rapidly and in the midst of the collapse of all the governance and regulating structures that we had. Environment we have already spoken about. Energy has taken us by surprise. No one thought that, in a few weeks last year, we would have a barrel of oil costing \$180, at its peak, pressure on energy sources all around; sources of energy are contributing to global warning; our inability to develop a global energy policy.

The shortage of food caught us by surprise. People are eating more. There are more people. Land is being degraded. There are biofuels on land which previously was agricultural land. While, on the one hand, technology is headed headlong as I have just described, it seems that we have not been able to solve the oldest problem for mankind: to get two or three meals a day. We do not have a plan for it, and we have little idea how it is to be solved.

The global financial structure, which has collapsed all around us, has already resulted, it has been estimated, although they were not the cause of it, in the destruction of assets in the developing world of \$1 trillion. We pick up the papers, and what we read is that what we yesterday thought was a solution, is not a solution at all.

So we really are at sea in every direction that we face. The truth is that we are either dying or dead to one world. We are not yet born to another one, because that world is going to be created by ourselves. It is not going to emerge on its own. Every institution of the world, every government, all citizens of the world, have this challenge before them, and the Commonwealth has to wonder what its role is in this world. Now, I will very quickly go over some of the responses, which we think are appropriate for the Commonwealth.

## Responses for the Commonwealth

### *Historical role of the Commonwealth*

It so happens that the Commonwealth, even though made in the last century, is designed for this one. It is a protean, malleable, responsive organisation, which moves with the times, in the best sense of the words. It does not have articles of association, it does not have terms of reference, and it does not have a charter to constrain it. It has responded throughout its history with a call of the times: I think this was the organisation which actually first introduced the idea of the creation of an international community after the war, an idea which itself did not exist before the war. More so, I think, than the UN: the UN was an option you would exercise, but it was caught in the grip of the Cold War, and with some of the polarities I have just described.

When I go to Downing Street, and I see those old photographs in the basement of Winston Churchill, Prime Minister Menzies of Australia and Nehru sitting there, with some other leaders, I wonder what brought them together. They certainly did not have a formal agenda: for the life of me, I could not think what important world issues they were, that, at that point in history, they could have all agreed upon. India had a very large role to play here, as the Vice Chancellor mentioned, and it has to be acknowledged, because Nehru made a very simple point. He said the Commonwealth has so far been an organisation associated with a passing era, but if this organisation is available to all members, new and old, so that they can all meet and exchange with each other how they looked at the world, and how the world could go, what could be wrong with this notion? They met only with the idea of addressing the new world as it arose.

It had a very significant impact. The heavy lifting in Africa, and South Africa and Rhodesia, was actually done by the Commonwealth. The political transformation in those societies - the Eminent Persons Group, which was sent by the Commonwealth, the Lancaster House Conference on Zimbabwe, and so on - was all associated with the Commonwealth. Most importantly, it allowed countries that were becoming independent immediately to internationalise themselves by being a part of the Commonwealth, and see themselves both in national and international terms. A country which became independent and went to a Commonwealth summit, met many other leaders expressing their points of view. They could immediately have, therefore, a friendship and rapport with many of these leaders which they would not be able to easily attain, particularly as the culture of the Commonwealth is such that no distinction is made in its proceedings between small and large societies, developed or developing societies. Tuvalu today, which has 10,000 people, can have equal time in the Commonwealth as, for example, the PM of India, which has a population of more than 1 billion. This inclusiveness is a great contemporary strength.

### *A tipping-point organisation*

This is on the assumption at these proceedings that, if you are talking about the world, the size of your country or the stage of development is beside the point. You can have a perspective, a view and an idea of the world which is intrinsically important. I think that this institution is such as can respond rapidly to the times, and give relevant answers. Many examples already

are before us. I have taken to calling it a 'tipping-point organisation'. Those of you that are familiar with Malcolm Gladwell's book will know what I am talking about. It is a relatively modest organisation in terms of investment, in terms of the budget it has, and in terms of the financial outlay on its technical co-operation programme. It is, however, a spectacularly equipped and empowered organisation, in terms of the ideas it can generate whose time has come.

This we have seen rapidly most recently in the field of environment. I, as Secretary-General, was invited to UNEP, the UN environment programme annual conference, in Nairobi, to moderate a four-hour plenary session with all the Ministers because the Director said that of all the papers he had seen on environmental governance, the best one was from the Commonwealth. The reason our contributions are seen in this way is because of the variety that have. From all five continents, all sizes, all stages of development, if we think that something is doable, or that a template is credible, why should it not have a global resonance? The same thing happened in the reform of international financial institutions: our leaders met, they approved an approach, and their statement has had a catalytic effect: it has encouraged the UN to debate those principles. Even the G20 Communique from Washington had a sprinkling of the ideas and principles of the Commonwealth.

*A world anchored in values*

Our central point today should be this. We are seeing the wreckage of the old world. Let us not repeat past errors. The older world was created, in terms of governance, by influential, powerful entities. Now, it must be built on the basis of principles. Wherever these principles take us, we must go there. We do not prejudge outcomes, but we should insist on the idea of principles. These principles are legitimacy, responsiveness, representativeness, accountability, transparency and effectiveness. I think people are beginning to see that this is the route that we must follow in all directions of governance. We have already had an influence in the areas of trade, financial governance, and environmental governance.

The second aspect of our work touches upon the idea of intrinsic sustainability. During the Cold War many developing countries could be forgiven for thinking that the outside world owed them a living. This is how the political competition played out. There were always people looking at you to help you out with development assistance and other forms of support. After the disappearance of the Cold War, however, it has become clear that all societies owe themselves a living. Sustainability must be defined in a way in which their people benefit, and which does not become dependent upon permanent predictable financial support from outsiders. In other words, the creation of a society of values and one which grows out of poverty.

I do not think that there is another organisation which in its governance standards is more aspirational than the Commonwealth has laid this down in the Harare Principles of 1991 and in the principles adopted subsequently concerning the separation of powers between executive, judiciary and the legislature; constitutional democracy and the importance of institutions like election commissions and freedom of the media. Many of these principles are the basis by which the members judge themselves and sometimes by which members are suspended. In the world today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is very clear that values by which societies have agreed

to live, are becoming and will become the cohering and the predominant factor in their sustainability.

This has had another effect, because of the 'self-efficacy theory' in sociology which tells you that, as soon as a person knows that something has been done, something which was previously, theoretical immediately comes down to the plane of the practical. This is particularly true if they can relate to the setting in which it has happened. Because of what they did in the Commonwealth, we already have, in Africa and in the NEPAD, and the peer-review mechanism, the same values which Africa will follow; they are the same values in the Pacific in the Biketawa Declaration, and the same values in the Caribbean. You have a spin-out effect in terms of what you have achieved.

### *Order and disorder*

The Commonwealth can help in building pivotal institutions in a way that I think it is very difficult for other organisations to do. I will give a quick example. Everyone knows what happened in the Maldives: there were elections, a president of thirty years standing accepted the results of an election and went into retirement. This took about three years to do in the Commonwealth. Incrementally, stage by stage, every stage was undramatic, but the outcome was extremely dramatic.

People ask why the Commonwealth is not better known. We brought a media guru to a retreat to tell us why this should be so. He said that we were perhaps too harmonious an organisation to be very newsworthy! I said that that was too heavy a price for us to pay: to make ourselves frictional, only to get into the news. I said to him 'Why do not you look at it like this, though? The world which I have just described can no longer be regarded as an orderly or a stable world. If not already a disordered world, it is certainly a proto-disorderly world. Why do you not look at it the other way? Instead of assuming that the world is orderly, and therefore pursuing and scrutinising only instances of disorder (which is what happens in the media all the time), assume that you are in a potentially disorderly world, and pursue as news also those interventions that contribute to order and values, and examine what it is that the Commonwealth was doing.' He thought it was an important perspective, and that he would think about it.

Inclusiveness is all-important in the world today. We can no longer have global governance, and other global programmes, in which it is only either emerging economies or those countries who are influential who can make a difference. We have to get to the idea that now the template has to be all-inclusive. Because of the inclusiveness of our own organisation, the credibility of what we say is very high, both in the advocacy that we do, and in the interventions we make.

### *Youth*

We are particularly mindful, as an organisation, of the role of the young in the world. It always gives me the greatest pleasure to speak in places where the young are present, whether universities or schools. I addressed two meetings this morning of schoolchildren. I told them that every time I saw them, I was filled with hope because every time I see what the adults are

doing, it has the opposite effect on me! The young are going to inherit the century; I told them I hoped that all of them would live through the century and fix the world.

We no longer have the luxury of innocence. When I was at this University, as I graduated, the fortunes of the world were very far from my mind. I think the youth of this world have lost that innocence. It is very difficult to leave university now entirely occupied with ideas of your own professional future, and not worry that you are surrounded by so much catastrophic news. Catastrophe has nothing to say for itself except for this: it does help you concentrate your mind. I have started saying, quite strongly, that we must not have a patronising view of the young. There is a horrible bureaucratic word we use, 'mainstreaming'. In fact, this media guru told us to stop using words like 'mainstreaming'; we have not got a better word, though. The youth and women in this world have to be mainstreamed in everything that we do. A Youth Department or Ministry is not enough. When we send observers for an election, we have young people as well. In everything that we do, we must simply treat the young as adults, and as having the real responsibility for the future of this world more than the adults do. We must look at the young in a radically different way, and help the young look at themselves in a radically different way.

It is astonishing how little our societies have been able to do in making the young look at themselves as primarily jobseekers, when we know that not more than 20% of those that leave university are going to secure these jobs. Do we not have a policy for the 80%? Why do we not instil in them the self-belief that they can be job creators, professionals in their own right, social entrepreneurs – but they must be agents of positive transformation in their own society, and not just passive recipients of what society can give.

The way we treat the young, and the things we tell them in our education and pedagogical systems: have we even started to look at this primary responsibility of the century? Have our trade bodies started looking at youth in this way? Have our industry bodies? How much have our great institutions, like the World Bank, thought that we have to make financial instruments for investment, which accept the idea of risk-taking, and do not seek collateral in the usual way, available to the youth of the world? We really have not been able to develop a coherent template for youth, even though as a human community, this is the group on which our hopes rest. We have had four Regional Commonwealth Youth Programme centres for some time, and I hope that in the years to come the Commonwealth can distinguish itself as a body which has given a tipping idea concerning the future of youth.

### *Women*

I think that women and the girl child are the litmus test. You do not have to look to twenty other definitions of development theory on whether you are doing well or not. If the women are doing well, you are doing alright; the rest of your system is healthy. There are two persisting global scandals. One is the persistence of poverty. The Commonwealth has 750 million poor people, for instance, who earn less than \$1 a day. The other is the inferior position of women in most of the societies of the world, and how it does not, even now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, seem to be an important enough issue. I hope that the Commonwealth will keep

hammering this point: that, for the health of our society, you need to pay attention both to the young and to women, in everything we do, and at all times.

*Making connections*

We need to have strategic partnerships. This is a very anxious world full of many worried people who share our values and approaches. I think they would welcome synergies to be developed, and joining other people, in pursuing ideas whose time has come. I think as an organisation - to that extent - we have to globalise ourselves. So far we have globalised ourselves by accident. For example, the HIPC idea of highly indebted poor countries and special needs of vulnerable states came from the Commonwealth. The protocols on recruitment of health workers and education workers have come from us. There is a series of innovations that we have made. Now we can get a global interface more by intent.

We have to think of technology, and how to exploit it, in the world today: in the kind of rapidly evolving world I have described. It is a free-wheeling and innovative world where processes are important together with result-based management and the more precise goals that we may set for ourselves: there is a place for both.

We must understand today the dynamic way in which society is altering all over the world, and seek to create connections between them. We have a body called Commonwealth Connects for that reason; within this we have a plan for a website called Partnership Platform Portal. It is going to be a one stop shop, which you can navigate once you enter and, hopefully, no matter what you are looking for, you will be able to find it. It will have multiple windows. The farmers can get extension services. Service industry can have skills development, as well as people in manufacturing. Those looking for renewable energy answers can find best practices, as well as people looking for good governance and education solutions. This is something which we are now investigating, with two consultants, and I hope that this will be a major Commonwealth portal in the time to come.

I also hope we can capture the diaspora, because technology now permits you to have your cake and eat it too. You can have the remittances from skills which are migrating; you can also have the skills connected for domestic upscaling through technology. There are very few delivery modules left in the world where you need the physical presence of a person, and even surgery can now be done remotely. I think the Commonwealth should be working on this, because we are losing a lot of skills. We are in a dilemma: we want our young people to be trained to the fullest extent, but the moment we do this, they become capable of entering the global market. We cannot say that we will keep them a notch below, substandard, simply so that they can work with us in a substandard way. There is a possible creative approach to this dilemma, and I think that the Commonwealth should be active in it.

It should be active in protecting our small and vulnerable member states against natural disasters. We have certain schemes, we know what they are, but I think we need more effective ones and we are working on that.

Infrastructure is a key element. Three things are needed. Who is going to design ambitious infrastructure projects? Who is going to administer them? Who is going to finance them? I

think many of our ambitions will remain unrealised, and on paper, without rail and road transport, ports, telecommunications, and power. What we are doing, in a pioneering way, is making a compendium of what has worked globally in public-private partnerships, in line with what the sociologists call the 'self-efficacy theory': let people know what has worked and how it has worked. We are working at it right now. I hope this will be one of the tipping-point contributions which the Commonwealth has made.

### **Concluding remarks: reconciling differences**

Vice Chancellor, you will be happy to know I am now drawing to a close. I have, however, to say something about what we in shorthand call R&U: respect and understanding. In the end, our future as a human society will depend on what is in our heart. We are driven by the lines drawn in our mind, by what is in our heart, and what is in our pocket, but in the time to come, the way we are growing together as a human community, we have to address what is in our heart. We have had dialogues of civilisations, dialogues of faiths and religions. They have their place and they are important.

Yet we must recognise that we have a dilemma. If you give a primary identity, which is faith-based, then you can only do it by diminishing or minimising a human personality. This is the dilemma, and I must say that Amartya Sen has written profoundly on this idea. He gave a lecture recently in which he said, in effect, 'I can be a good Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu or Christian – but I can also have an interest in philosophical traditions of the Enlightenment in Europe. I can be very interested in meditation techniques in other faiths. I can be very interested in Russian novelists or novelists from Latin America, no matter where I am in the world. I can follow the fortunes of Arsenal.' Why should we allow people to diminish us? I have been talking about such a humanist approach, as against a reductionist faith-based approach as our primary identity. I think everyone has to be left to decide the rich mix of their identity and where they stand. I think the Commonwealth can play an enormous role, because of its variety, and because all faiths are represented in it, by seeing how prejudice and social divisions are constructively mediated. How they are mediated through education, through media, through all kinds of public channels, in how youth are treated and encouraged, in how women are treated. This is the end from which we should begin: by giving self respect to an individual. They will then find their own balance in life, and the world will find its own balance too.

Right now, the impression that is given, contributed to by Huntington's thesis, is that clashing cultures and civilisations are irreconcilable, and can never find peaceable space with each other. I think perhaps the opposite is true. It is because we are already culturally inter-penetrated spaces that there is panic in some parts of the world. I want to give you a story in conclusion which demonstrated this.

A *New York Times* correspondent in Quetta at the time there was the American bombing against the Taliban in Kabul said that the most bloodcurdling anti-American demonstration he had ever seen was in Quetta. He was in Islamabad, and felt that he had not been very wise at all in venturing out to observe this procession. He fell behind, and did not want to be seen. There was high passion and all these posters inviting bloody retribution on America. He saw a

young boy, straggling behind, tired – this procession had gone on for miles - and he sat down. The correspondent quietly, gingerly, walked up to him and started talking to him in broken Urdu. He asked the boy why he was in the procession. The boy echoed the sentiments against America etched on the posters. The two had an exchange and, as a parting question (a throwaway question), the correspondent asked the boy what his ambition in life was. For the boy, it was a very serious question and he reflected on it. After some seconds, he said that his life's ambition was to be a surgeon in America.

It is because our spaces are inter-penetrated that people in more orthodox parts of the world know that somebody may be sleeping next to them, but they do not know the dreams that they are dreaming. That creates the collision that we have today. We must find ways out of it. I think that the Commonwealth has a responsibility in acting at all levels which I have mentioned to play its role, and I hope that it will be seen as an organisation which is exercising the wisdom function. Everything in the world is being globalised: factors of production, civil society, disease, small arms, narcotics, money laundering, criminality, trade – you name it. What we need to see happening more rapidly is the globalisation of wisdom. I think the Commonwealth is the organisation which was tailor-made for that.

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Vice Chancellor, I end with something you said in another of your addresses. What Cambridge does well, and must keep doing, is respond to change in the world, and help shape and lead it. You also said that as global solutions are sought for global problems, and that we must all be ready to play a leading role in international partnerships. I think, at another point, you said that we must work to the slogan 'transforming tomorrow'. You are in this business, and I am in this business too. Thank you very much.

**Alison Richard:** Secretary-General, thank you for a marvellously wide-ranging lecture. You have educated and informed us, provoked new thinking and questions in what you told us, but also, and perhaps most importantly for me anyway, you give great grounds for hope in a difficult world. For all of that, we thank you.