

Commonwealth Chat

Commonwealth Conversation

RCS

Monday 10th August 2009

1. Seven young Pakistanis within the age range of 18-30, representing the youth of Lahore, met at UET, Lahore, Pakistan on Monday 10 August 2009 for the 'Commonwealth Chat' and discussed major issues concerning the Commonwealth with regard to their opinions and experiences.
2. The participants were normally dependent on parents or did home tuitions for a living.
3. The Chat was moderated by Wajahat Nassar. They agreed on the following.

General on the Commonwealth of Nations

4. The members suggested that the word 'Commonwealth' would relate to an organization of different countries with an agreement to work towards set goals;
5. It was clear that the members did not have general information about the Commonwealth and did not know what it did.
6. The members unanimously suggested that they had little or no knowledge of the Commonwealth and were not aware of it.
7. The members emphasized the need to raise the awareness of the Commonwealth of Nations at the grass-root level.
8. A majority of the members were neutral with regard to the organization.
9. The results of the Commonwealth Quiz resonated with the understanding of no previous knowledge of the Commonwealth. Only a few questions were answered correctly.
10. With regard to the programmes of the Commonwealth, the members were not sure and suggested only what any international organization would do.

Information sharing on Commonwealth

11. The general reaction of the members to the information in Appendix II was surprising
12. For almost all of the members, the information was new
13. The surprising information, as quoted by them, was the 1.8 billion people living as Commonwealth citizens and the percentage of youth population.
14. The members suggested that the diversity within the Commonwealth was appreciable and suggested a good repute of the organization.

The Role of the Commonwealth

15. The reaction to the information in Appendix III was not surprising as the members had already addressed the same in the quiz.
16. However, the members were now able to relate the exact realms of work to the organization such as promotion of equality, training, social programmes and decentralization process.
17. The members agreed that the information provided had increased their understanding of the organization.
18. The members agreed that the Commonwealth should focus on key issues of Kashmir, poverty, food security, disaster management and terrorism.
19. The members also agreed that the Commonwealth should supply funds in a more transparent manner and ensure that the funds funnel to the grass-root level.
20. All the members rejected the notion of any partnership with other international organizations to serve the people.
21. The members agreed that the strength of the Commonwealth lied with its diversity and equal status for all members and a sense of weakness in relation to lack of implementation.

Benefits of Membership

22. All the members related that they would not be concerned if Pakistan left the Commonwealth of Nations and would not be affected.

23. The members suggested that the ordinary population of Pakistan is not aware of the aims and working of the organization and thus it would not leave them in disappointment.

Benefits of Membership

24. Each member agreed that the first policy of the Commonwealth should be the peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue and reduction in poverty.
25. Members related that the short term goals of the organization should be poverty reduction, youth involvement and public health.
26. Members iterated the long term goals to be safety against terrorism, peace, education and youth involvement.
27. All the members agreed that a funding committee should be setup to govern the transfer of funds to grass-root level and the need to combat corruption;

Thoughts on Commonwealth

28. The members agreed that the chat had provided them with an opportunity to garner more information on the Commonwealth and related that the membership of Mozambique was interesting yet surprising.
29. The members realized the increase in understanding of new concepts on the Commonwealth and affirmed to read further about it.

Recommendations

30. The chat concluded that the Commonwealth should increase its recognition and should reach grass-root levels.
31. The chat highlighted the solution to the Kashmir issues as central to peace and development in South Asia.
32. The chat emphasized that the funds should be supplied in a more transparent manner to ensure proper use.
33. The members reaffirmed that a force or implementation process was required to steer the Commonwealth resolutions.

34. The members stated that the smaller nations should be give a quota when representing their resolutions.
35. The members recognized that a free trade agreement was needed.
36. Members emphasized the need to target terrorism at its root level
37. Members suggested a need for youth involvement and consultation with regard to decisions of the Commonwealth programmes.
38. Members emphasized the need for investment in sectors such as education and technology;
39. The members emphasized on more scholarship programmes for students from developing countries.

General

40. The chat was conducted according to the guide lines set and given by the RCS. Open ended questions were asked and the members were requested to relate to their experiences and opinions on the organization. At the end of each discussion, a summary was provided to the members to approve it.