

The following is a speech which I (the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth) would give at the (or a) Centenary of the Commonwealth celebration.

Since its conception in 1949, the modern Commonwealth has played many roles. From Kingmaker to venture capitalist to preacher and teacher, it took time for the organisation, born of imperialism, to find its final role and its most sturdy footing. There were times in history when Britain ruled over many of the member states of the Commonwealth, ignoring their voice and supplanting its own. But those times are long gone, and all nations in the Commonwealth now listen to each other with patience and mutual respect. In line with the organisation's ideals of democracy, equality and humanity, the Commonwealth has become the encapsulation of all things that modern nations and societies aspire to. With no single leader but speaking with a voice strengthened by diversity. Standing with all that is good in mankind and standing against all that is bad. I believe that *we*, more than any other organisation, do all we can to keep the world striving against the basest and least desirable aspects of humanity. We realise that strength comes from diversity, and encourage *all* nations to respect and nurture *all* cultures and traditions, including their own. As the world continues to destroy nature's jungles to replace them with concrete ones, The Commonwealth strives to fight for our planet because we cannot live without it. The Earth can live without us, but not vice versa. All peoples must come to realise that we are still, and may always be, wholly dependent on the life giving gifts of our natural home. Yes, the members of the Commonwealth strive to fight for the environment, but in some cases it is shooting itself in the foot, as is the entire world. All mankind must want to save the planet, or such a rescue will be impossible. We have come far over the past 100 years. Decades ago we realised that The Commonwealth should not and could not be the UN, the WHO, the World Bank or any other of the hundreds of international organisations. It cannot be summed up by an acronym a few letters long, nor should it be. It should not try and supplement the activities of other organisations with its own. It could not do everything, and would fail if it tried to do so. So The Commonwealth was reorganised into the entity we see today. A democratic institution which aims to do nothing more than promote, foster and advance ideas, philosophies and actions which benefit all peoples, places and things in and out of The Commonwealth member states. The Commonwealth is a symbol and a beacon. A symbol of what we have achieved and a beacon of what we still can. Of course conflict and argument are inevitable in a society which listens to all voices, but The Commonwealth endeavours to deal with conflict, unerringly, with words and not swords. It is, as of this moment, inevitable that people will come to blows. But all members of the Commonwealth agree that such is always the last option and that the Commonwealth is not or should ever be, an institution run from thrones of bayonets. Military matters are not for The Commonwealth to decide upon, but almost always to discourage. The Commonwealth is now built upon a solid foundation of ideas and respect. Hopefully The Commonwealth will continue to grow into an ever larger group of friendly nations with the same goal: to encourage the prosperity of all things excellent.

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DOB 15/05/1990
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