

THE BOTTOM LINE

Commonwealth Day: celebrating global friends, partners

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On Mar 14, the 2.5 billion people who make up the Commonwealth family, across 54 countries, come together to celebrate Commonwealth Day. This annual observation, which takes place on the second Monday of March every year, is a chance to convene to recognise the friendship and partnership among a family of nations that spans across the globe.

This year, the theme of Commonwealth Day, and of the upcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) is "Delivering a common future".

This message is particularly resonant, given what the world has been through in the past 2 years.

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted, for better or for worse, the interconnectedness and interdependence of the international community.

What has become clear is that partnerships and friendships among countries are more important than ever.

This is why the Commonwealth remains important to this day: as an institution which values partnership, collaboration and friendship among nations above all else.

As the world gears up towards "building back better" from the Covid-19 crisis, Rwanda, Singapore and our fellow member states face both shared goals and shared challenges: in political, economic, social and environmental spheres.

Even as I write, the planet is standing at the precipice of a climate crisis, while oil prices soar, and the geopolitical landscape becomes ever more fraught. In this context, the Commonwealth is a particularly important forum to discuss how countries can work together on united solutions for a brighter common future.

CHOGM in Rwanda

The upcoming CHOGM in June - which will be hosted in Kigali, Rwanda's capital, for the first time - is an important opportunity to further these discussions. The fact that - after Covid-19-related delays - the Commonwealth family can meet in-person for the first time in 2018, is particularly important.

It is our honour - as a country - to host our friends from across the world in June, and to assume the position of chair-in-office of the Commonwealth.

We look forward to drawing on our unique experience throughout our time at the helm of this prestigious organisation.

Equally, we will look to draw upon the experiences of all of our partners, and to foster a spirit of collaboration.

As Rwandans over the last 28 years - since our country was torn apart by the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi - we have drawn upon knowledge, expertise and assistance from partners around the world to rebuild our nation.

We know all too well, therefore, the value of learning from others, and working with them towards common goals.

Indeed, the developmental model of Singapore is one which has been of great interest to our government, and we have taken inspiration from Singapore in many of the policies and programmes that have led our country's remarkable rebirth over the last 28 years.

Forums like CHOGM, and organisations like the Commonwealth, present the opportunity for meaningful discussions between our 2 great nations, and all the other nations that make up this truly eclectic global family. By harnessing the spirit of friendship and collaboration, we can move together on issues that matter to us.

This year is not only historic for Rwanda, but indeed for the Commonwealth as a whole. The year 2022 will be the first time that CHOGM is held in a country with no history of British colonial rule.

This is a true sign of the Commonwealth's value, and its forward-facing agenda. The forum is oriented towards broadening partnerships and drawing upon friendship and unity in pursuit of common goals.

Global partnership and dialogue

On this Commonwealth Day, therefore, let us come together to celebrate the importance of global partnership and dialogue - not only among all 54 of the Commonwealth's member nations, but between Rwanda and Singapore as well.

Let us look ahead to CHOGM and to an enduring friendship among nations that helps us, as a global community, to overcome the challenges ahead, and deliver a common future.

The writer is High Commissioner of the Republic of Rwanda to Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, and Ambassador-designate to Indonesia

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