



The Commonwealth

## **REMARKS BY COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY-GENERAL THE RT HON PATRICA SCOTLAND KC**

45th Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the  
Caribbean Community  
Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 4 July 2023

---

Prime Minister Skerritt and leaders of the Caricom Family

Excellencies

Brothers & Sisters, Friends and Colleagues of the Caribbean & the Commonwealth and the international community. I stand on the established protocols.

I am delighted to be back in Trinidad & Tobago!  
To be with my Trini family, in the land of pan and calypso.

It is a momentous day for the Caribbean. A precious moment in history. We come together to celebrate CARICOM's golden Jubilee.

The fulfilment of the dreams of the four great founding fathers of this union who knew what greatness could flow if the spirit and talent of the region could be melded together to fight the troubles of the world. The seeds of which were even then apparent.

Sown at a time when the world was still blighted by racism, threatened by inequality, rising sea levels and debt, the ravages of climate change, thirsting for innovation independence and change with a determination to maintain the rule of law.

They were Caribbean leaders with a hunger for development, a vision for our region's future and a belief in the contribution which our children could make to the salvation of our world if they were given the opportunities which, in equity and justice, they deserved.

If they were to make the contribution which the world needed and which their eclectic cultural history and innate talent made possible.



## The Commonwealth

Theirs was a vision which the leaders of this region in the fifty years which have followed have battled to deliver.

It is a vision which our leaders, who proudly took the stage here again in Chaguaramas reaffirm, repeating the steps taken by those who went before them. Welcomed by the Honourable Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Keith Rowley to the blessed shores of Trinidad and Tobago, to this 45<sup>th</sup> Meeting of CARICOM Chaired by Dominica's own Prime Minister, the Honourable Roosevelt Skerri **and joined now by thirteen other members and other associate members of Caricom.**

TODAY is an even greater day for the Commonwealth of 56 nations of which our 12 CARICOM members are a vital part, adding a special spice, the yeast which has helped the whole Commonwealth family to rise to meet the challenges which remain from the past and those which press ever harder in this new technology-driven and increasingly digitalised world.

We have thirty-three small states, twenty-five of which are small island developing and low-lying states. Fourteen are least developed countries. Their interests are pivotal to the Commonwealth's success.

We celebrate the enduring partnership between CARICOM and the Commonwealth of Nations who now together represent one-third of the world- 2.6 billion people, sixty per cent of whom are under the age of thirty.

We further invigorate that partnership, as we work together to rise to the challenges of today and seize the opportunities of tomorrow.

All Caricom members are cherished friends and partners.

And the Caribbean has offered the Commonwealth - and the wider world - so much.

50 years of leadership, wisdom, vision, and moral courage.

50 years of solidarity; of standing up for what is right; and of giving a voice to the vulnerable.

You gave us Sonny Ramphal - the first Caribbean and the longest serving Secretary-General of the Commonwealth:



The Commonwealth

Under his leadership the Commonwealth

- led the titanic struggle against racism in Southern Africa, which set the Commonwealth on the right side of history, and helped to vanquish minority rule in Rhodesia, and apartheid in South Africa.
- helped to pioneer the notion of sustainable development.
- was one of the first to warn of the dangers of sea-level rise and of the existential threat posed by climate change, culminating in the 1989 Langkawi Declaration on the Environment in Malaysia which identified the existential threat posed by climate change and the vulnerability of small island developing states.

Today, CARICOM and the Commonwealth are joined in a partnership rooted in principled and practical action.

In the face of broken climate finance promises, this means combining the Commonwealth's unwavering commitment as the world's foremost champion of small states, with the spirit and energy of the region, for the region and with our family of nations.

It was the former President of Guyana, Bharrat Jagdeo, now Vice President, who led a Commonwealth expert group on climate finance, resulting in the creation of our Climate Finance Access Hub which has been delivered under my leadership.

Since its creation in 2016, with an initial investment of only \$6 million, our Climate Finance Access Hub has unlocked more than \$276 million in climate finance for nineteen of our member countries. An additional \$500 million worth of projects are currently in the pipeline. \$52 million of that has already been delivered to members in the region.

In the face of crippling debt, it means marshalling the support of the entire Commonwealth behind global finance reform, in particular the Bridgetown Initiative spearheaded by my dear sister, Prime Minister Mottley.

And as technology advances, it means working together to train tens of thousands of young people in digital skills and bring our Small States together with the



## The Commonwealth

world's leading thinkers and entrepreneurs to bridge the digital divide and enable all our citizens to thrive in the future economy.

[Pause]

50 years ago - here in Trinidad & Tobago - you came together as a family, united in a shared commitment to enhance the connections, wellbeing, prosperity and security of Caribbean countries and citizens.

We stand together today as two families - CARICOM and Commonwealth - bound together by history, values, and interests.

Stronger, more resilient, and more determined than ever.

Standing shoulder-to-shoulder when we need each other.

And always - *always* - striving to do what is right.

[Pause]

As you celebrate this significant milestone, I want to say this:

As a Dominican daughter of the Caribbean, I am proud to be part of you, to come from you.

As the 6<sup>th</sup> Secretary-General of the Commonwealth and the second to hail from the Caribbean, I cherish you.

And as a citizen of a changing and challenging world, I know that we need 50 more years of your wisdom, vision, and moral courage.

Because CARICOM is a force for good - and even though the challenges are great, together we are more than equal to them.

I believe in CARICOM.

I believe in all of you.

I believe in the relationship between us. And I offer you today - and every day - my heart and my hand in love and partnership.



The Commonwealth

Because I believe in our capacity to keep building vital connections and pursuing our common goals and the common good.

Thank you.

God bless you.

And God bless all the people of the Caribbean, the Commonwealth and all our international friends.