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## CLOSING ADDRESSES

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### 1. Prof. K. S. Murshid (Commonwealth Assistant Secretary-General)

Mr. Chairman, Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen:  
I think it bears repetition that we have been extremely fortunate in having Delhi as the venue of this remarkable conference. The Government that presides at this ancient capital has been gracious, the climate marvellous, the hospitality spectacular and delicate, the co-operation at all levels, of an order that wins the warmest gratitude.

The Prime Minister of India, who was with us for the inauguration of the conference, left with us the stimulus of a vision of education whose end is an independent, truthful, fearless, socially useful man, in possession of his true potential, finding his happiness in the happiness of all. The Education Minister and his other colleagues in the Government gave the conference firm support not only by their physical presence but by identifying themselves with its objectives. To all of them the conference is indebted.

We have also other debts. Dr. Robert Gardiner delivered an illuminating Keynote Address as well as practised a bit of gentle evangelism on behalf of an idea which seems to have acted as leaven on the minds of fellow delegates. A great deal of the intellectual groundwork of the conference was laid by the lead and support paper writers. We owe them thanks. If these persons contributed to the intellectual regime of the conference, there is another group of men and women who provided indispensable and invaluable operational support. They include the seconded staff of the Government of India and the administrative and editorial staff of the Education Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat who in performing their duties set impossible standards of devotion and hard work. I gratefully acknowledge their contribution to the conference.

I must pay special tributes to the Secretary and Co-Secretary of the conference whose imaginative planning and well co-ordinated effort have been a large factor in its smooth conduct.

The Conference however owes its largest debt to you, Mr. Chairman, who guided its proceedings with such ability and wisdom. You helped set its conceptual framework as a member of the working party. You have obliged us to keep steadfastly before our eyes, throughout the conference, your deeply felt view of non-formal education as a process of learning and a way of changing the economic and human status of the poor and the deprived. Your charm, your tact, your courtesy, your method of flexibility which gave away little or nothing, will be remembered. Above all, whether in a committee or a plenary, you were in command, and one felt that with you somewhere in the Taj, smoking your pipe, all was well with the conference!

Sir, a moment ago I described the conference as remarkable. It has indeed certain remarkable features. My colleagues on the staff of the Commonwealth Secretariat assure me that

this has been the hardest working conference they can remember. In part this reflects the previous commitment of the delegates to the cause of non-formal education. But there seems to be more to it than that. The conference developed a momentum of its own, transforming personal enthusiasm into co-operative endeavour which demanded and received the best each individual participant could offer. The delegates addressed themselves to their task with a seriousness and professional competence that fully bore out the 'specialist' character of their undertaking while their feeling of urgency and human care far exceeded the bounds of pure professional concern.

In the event, we have, in the report approved by the conference, a corpus of far-ranging ideas, programmes, and recommendations for action, which is bound to engage the attention of policy makers and planners for human development. I felicitate the conference on this valuable piece of work. It has helped to clarify the relationships between formal and non-formal education in ways which, I am sure, those administering formal systems will find particularly useful. It has proposed linkages between educational programmes for children and those for adults, giving practical expression to the universal aspiration for life-long education. It has also raised sharply the question of reward and recognition, in terms of wages and social status, of the non-formally educated citizen and posed it before governments which are the largest employers. The implications are rather explosive even for the converted. This therefore is no bland document.

The conference addressed a number of its impressive body of recommendations to the Secretariat. Mr. Chairman, if you would permit me an aside at this stage, I recall the good Malaysian gentlemen who took on the vocation of pregnancy amid protests from a lady from this assembly. Such is the stuff of which heaven is made, that there are some who are not free to conceive, only free to undergo the agony of pregnancy. We are therefore permitted the equally unsatisfactory role of a catalyst, and when the Secretariat is referred to as a catalyst, a medium which causes change in curious and often contrary substances without itself changing, the overtones of the metaphor make me feel rather sad.

Surely we cannot be at a conference on non-formal education and not feel the desire to change which is what it is all about. We by no means look upon ourselves as a perfected frozen structure. A strong impulse towards change, which would mean fresh responsibility for the Secretariat, would therefore be for us a most welcome opportunity and a challenge.

The demands implied in the recommendations vary: most seem to be within our current terms of reference and competence; some would clearly depend on more resources than we now possess; while one or two would, as you anticipated, require study and exploration and, perhaps, appropriate mandate. These recommendations, I must stress, have behind them the weight of a specialist conference on the subject of non-formal education for development held at the express behest of the member governments of the Commonwealth. These, I should like to assure you, will therefore receive the most serious attention of the Commonwealth Secretary-General.

It will, I hope, be no transgression to say that the Commonwealth has through this conference acknowledged the importance of non-formal education in development and accepted the application of co-operative endeavours, which lie at the heart of Commonwealth activities, to the solution of

problems of governmental and non-governmental agencies. It is now for you to build on this acknowledgement and turn your decisions into programmes and action at the national level where your effort and political will alone would determine your success.

We met in India, a country of awesome problems and grand initiatives, as acutely conscious of its past as of its present, a country whose beauty has been deepened by suffering and whose grandeur encompasses historical achievements as well as a bold acceptance of current challenges. I see the value of the deliberations you have had in this stimulating setting, which illustrates and illuminates many of your own problems, in the interaction between individuals, groups, and agencies of different backgrounds and the resulting mutual enlightenment and collective wisdom. This wisdom is perhaps superior to your individual wisdom and is likely to stay with you as a guide to your action and a means of influencing decision-makers at the political level in your country.

I am aware, Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, that I have not yet struck a valedictory note and that it is appropriate that I do so as we part after fifteen crowded days of exhilarating collegiate work. I cannot say goodbye to you in the words of John Donne, the seventeenth century English poet, who once consoled his dear wife on the eve of a separation by saying: "Think that we are but turned aside to sleep." Clearly, this is not permissible! May I however recall on this occasion the great words of the Buddha who said to his disciples as he lay dying: "Be a lamp unto yourselves and work out your salvation with diligence." We together have lit a lamp here which will light our way. And we also need diligence, at home and abroad, in every part of the Commonwealth, the diligence of unsleeping awareness and effort on behalf of a cause whose fulfilment depends so much on the integrity of thought and action commended by the Buddha.

## 2. Dr. Malcolm S. Adiseshiah (Conference Chairman)

We have now come to the closing moments of the arduous enterprise we put our hands to a fortnight ago - though for some of us it was three months ago, for others six months ago, and for the Secretariat a year ago.

My first task is to associate myself with the expressions of deep-felt thanks already given to the Government of India for its warm and generous hospitality, to the Indian delegation, and to those working behind closed doors who ensured that our documents were reproduced and our needs promptly served. Our thanks go out to all the men and women who worked so hard and so successfully to make us comfortable, contented, and able to get on with and finish our work.

My second duty is to associate myself with the gratitude expressed to the Commonwealth Assistant Secretary-General and the Secretariat for giving us the opportunity of exchanging views on what is an important problem for us all and for enabling us to arrive at what I have called a "storehouse of collective wisdom" which will be the penumbra of our individual and national efforts in the days to come.

My third duty is to thank the heads of delegation for the kind and generous support given to me, the Commonwealth Assistant Secretary-General and the Secretariat for the day-to-day organization and running of the conference and the twelve committee chairmen and secretaries who guided us and built for us the storehouse of collective wisdom which is the main conference result.

Now what do we have to show for all this generous hospitality, this hard and devoted labour, and the agreed conclusions which I call collective wisdom? My answer is that there have been three results as far as I am concerned.

The first is a set of ideas. We have realized that non-formal education, like development, is to do with people. We once thought that development was increased GNP; we once thought that education was what happened within the four walls of the school or university. We now know that development is reducing poverty and unemployment and fighting inequality, of which poverty and unemployment are simply an outflow. We now know that somehow the poor, the deprived, the backward and the socially weak have got left out of our schools, and that it is their learning, not what happens in the school, which is education. It is to describe this socially and humanly important learning system that we have coined the ugly word "non-formal" education.

Second we have grappled with the issue of the politicality of our mandate as development educators. What is political in our mandate? Here I have noticed a number of tendencies. To begin with, as I also found in UNESCO, I have detected a trend that when we do not like something or someone, we say it/he/she is "political". We recall that we are educators and therefore should not be concerned with this unclean thing, the political issue. On the other hand we have also come to the uncomfortable realization that education is not politically neutral. It is an active supporter and faithful reflector of the status quo in society. If the status quo is predominantly unequal and unjust, and it is increasingly so, education will be increasingly unequal and unjust and there will be no place for non-formal education to improve the conditions of the poor. If, however, the society is moving in an egalitarian direction, then non-formal education can and will flourish. And so it has been borne in upon us that we had better examine fearlessly the political implications of our proposals, programmes and positions. There is a need for a common political consensus where we have multiple political parties, and a concordance between the party and the people where we have the uni-party system. What emerges is the need for a political will for non-formal education to enable it to get on the development map of the country and play its proper role.

Third, there has been an epistemological exercise as we have gone about clarifying certain concepts: non-formal education, what it is when expressed positively; development services, what they are and how they are part of non-formal education; democratization of education; and participatory research. Something more than a pure academic stand is called for. There must also be a non-academic personal, social and political commitment - an identification with the poor as shown in the lives of Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave and many other such great spirits in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean.

A fourth idea is that education is not teaching - which is merely instrumental and not the only instrument at that - but learning. This is the conceptual bedrock on which non-formal education rests. In non-formal education programmes for all but very young children, it is the learning techni-

ques - the capacity to learn how to learn on which success or failure is judged. The teacher in non-formal education disappears and is replaced by the facilitator, the animator the worker. Non-formal education thus replaces the vertical hierarchical arrangements which education has come to represent by a horizontal structure in which all are learning from each other.

The second broad carry-over from this Conference is the Programme we have forged.

I have no hesitation in describing it as being of a quality I have rarely come across in a conference of this size. It has been established on the basis of quite detailed and high-level discussions, careful preparation by our resource persons and the Secretariat, and by a process of mutual consultation at this Conference. It is worked out at various levels: spatially (mini micro at the village or small town level, micro at the district level, and macro at the state and/or central level); age-wise at our varied clients - children, adolescents, adults; sex-wise at women and girls; in terms of occupation at farmers, fishermen, small industry workers, and so on. It involves problems of entry and re-entry, certification and rewards, and co-ordination between formal and non-formal systems and between non-formal education and development. It advocates using teaching technology and learning media in single, group or multi-media combinations. It incorporates, at all levels, the relationship between all these and employment on the one hand and cultural life and spiritual values on the other.

For me, the real innovation of the programme we have adopted is the education of the school drop-out, about which we in the Commonwealth and the Third World generally have little or no expertise. We have built up a long and impressive experience and tradition in the area of non-formal education for adults. But we are at the starting stage as far as non-formal education of the school age group - the drop out, the push-out and the left-out - is concerned.

Taking the age-group up to year 18 and using UNESCO statistics, I compute that in the developing Commonwealth countries 120 million children are actually in school, and a further 120 million are drop-outs, push-outs and left-outs. It is about the learning facilities for this latter group of deprived future citizens that non-formal education is concerned. In the past we have assumed that if we can make our schools more attractive, improve the curriculum, make the teachers sympathetic and their teaching methods relevant, and feed the children at mid-day and give them free books, we can get them all in school. We have tried all this in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean and we are still left with the problem of 120 million children out of school. Hence our programme of non-formal education for the drop-outs. It is not yet a strong programme because we have little expertise and experience in this area. It is static because we are just making a start. But it makes urgent and explosive demands on us because it concerns our children and youths and their learning.

The second insistent demand of the programme we have formulated is that it calls on us repeatedly to co-operate amongst ourselves within countries, between countries, and on a pan-Commonwealth basis with the Commonwealth Secretariat as the focal point, on various means and methods to push this programme forward and accelerate its execution. We have watched with fascination Jamaica offering to join other countries in developing education research and training programmes that would spread over all the Commonwealth. We have also admired the offer of Australia to modernize

and computerize documentation services which can serve non-formal education in the Commonwealth. Many of us have asked that India, which seems to have everything in the way of problems as well as being a sophisticated laboratory of solutions and attempted solutions in non-formal education, should be the concrete embodiment of this co-operation. In this regard the wise comments of the Commonwealth Assistant Secretary-General on the way forward are apposite. It is only in co-operation with one another that we will see our problems more clearly, become stronger and avoid collective pitfalls and failures.

The third outcome of the Conference is the personal friendships we have formed, the human encounters we have enjoyed, and the human faces that will remain enshrined in our minds. I have always found that when the resolutions, the recommendations, the minutes, the report, and all else are forgotten the human relationships established at a conference, and the friendships we formed there remain indelibly in one's memory. In this connection, I shall carry with me memories of Professor Murshid remaining ever cool and calm; Rex Akpofure dominating his universe in his quiet and effective manner; Miss Singh being all-present everywhere; Dr. Gardiner creeping around quietly dropping intellectual bombshells; Dr. Daswani stepping in quickly and effectively to man the breach caused by his Chairman's illness during the first week as Mrs. Rahman did during the second week to replace Mrs. Robinson; Mr. Tlebere whose calmness and intellectual and spiritual clarity shook us up; and Mr. Dodd whose quiet counsel was valued by us all. These long-lasting human images are the most precious gift of the Conference.

And so we go home to our universities, offices and institutions. The hopes with which we started this Conference - expressed in the Commonwealth Secretary-General's message and the opening addresses given by the Prime Minister, the Assistant Secretary-General and Robert Gardiner - have now been concretized in the programme we take home with us. On its full, free and faithful execution depends the development of the Commonwealth developing countries. That is the call I place before you as we now part.