

ADDRESS OF RESPONSE BY THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT REPRESENTATIVE:

MR. REX E.O. AKPOFURE, DIRECTOR, EDUCATION DIVISION

It is my privilege to bring you this morning the warm greetings of our Commonwealth Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Shridath Ramphal, on this happy occasion of the opening of the Commonwealth Regional Workshop for Africa on In-Service Teacher Education. I do so with a special satisfaction because the occasion fulfils for me, for the first time, the hope which I had nurtured for some two years since taking office, to visit this part of our Commonwealth.

My pleasant duty therefore this morning is first to greet you all, to tell you something about the modern Commonwealth of Nations and what it represents, to illustrate briefly its efforts through its Secretariat and this workshop just opened by our Guest of Honour and to thank all those through whose efforts it has been possible for us to meet here this morning.

The Commonwealth and Co-operation in Action

Hon. Minister, the greetings I bring you from the Secretariat in London symbolize the hand of fellowship and co-operation which marks our Modern Commonwealth, now an Association of 40 member countries as far apart as Asia and Africa, the Pacific and the Caribbean and Europe. And although it is a voluntary Association of Sovereign Nations, its bonds of common history and traditions and the principles re-stated in its Declaration of Singapore of 1971, have steadily guided its co-operation and consultation. Today's Commonwealth seeks, inter alia, to promote co-operation in a world order in which Commonwealth countries can participate meaningfully, with dignity and mutual respect, irrespective of differences in size, resources and development. It is based on the willing support and contribution of our member states, expressed through occasions such as this one. Indeed, Hon. Minister, only yesterday in the Commonwealth Caribbean, the Government of Barbados also inaugurated for us, with similar resources, a 9-week regional course in Educational Administration and Supervision. That inauguration and your own this morning of this workshop, are a reassuring testimony both of Commonwealth activity and especially of the support and contribution of our member Governments - evidence of the value they attach to the Commonwealth Association and we are justly encouraged by that evidence.

Sample Activities

Encouraged by such support, the Commonwealth through its Secretariat, is increasingly, active in a large variety of fields. In Education, in Economic Affairs, through Trade and Industrial Co-operation, in Health, Law and Finance, in Youth Affairs, in Science and Rural Development - in all these fields, to name only a few, Commonwealth Ministers and their officials are in constant consultation which encourages a two-way flow of co-operation. Through the mechanism of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC), the Commonwealth Fellowship and Scholarship Plan (CSFP), specialized regional programmes such as the Commonwealth Southern Africa Programme for Zimbabwe and Namibia, through many schemes for the exchange of persons and expertise, the Commonwealth is assisting member states to improve the quality of life of its peoples, in a world in which material inequalities are perhaps the greatest threat to stability today. These many activities seldom achieve the distinction of international headlines; yet they are recognized as valuable, based as they are on a free and voluntary contribution, by member states.

Education and this Workshop

It is against this global background that our educational co-operation must be seen. This workshop is the last in a series recommended by Commonwealth Ministers of Education since their Kingston Conference of 1974. The first was held in Barbados in 1977; the second in Sri Lanka last year. In the present one, we shall be examining ways and means of implementing policies and practices identified from previous workshops in this area of In-Service Teacher Education. Through our experience in your country, we hope to take away a better understanding, a better ability to co-operate, and a better appreciation of those cultural values which all teacher education must take into account, if education is to attempt to prepare students for life wherever it is provided.

The Political Will

In all these efforts, Hon. Minister, we recognise that it is the Political Will of each member Government to grapple with problems identified and to move with determination towards solutions, that gives these conferences and workshops any meaning. The major responsibility for action rests with our Governments and the determination to mobilize their national resources and draw on international opportunities marks the way forward. Without that will, all our recommendations and solutions are merely as "sounding brass and tinkling cymbals". This is why we are particularly glad that you are inaugurating our workshop this morning, because through your presence, we are encouraged to look forward to the will to action, undoubtedly with realism and counting costs carefully.

Acknowledgements

Finally, Mr. Chairman, Hon. Minister, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it remains for me to express our gratitude to our Host Government and people of this Kingdom of Swaziland for their welcome and hospitality. I do so through your goodself, Hon. Minister, and specially do thank you for the honour of your presence, in spite of your urgent Cabinet duties this morning, in order to open our workshop.

We wish to thank also your Permanent Secretary, Director of Education, the Principal, Project Leader and Staff of this Education Centre as well as other national agencies in evidence, such as the Royal Swazi Airlines and others, for all the facilities made available to our participants from so many Commonwealth countries.

You, our guests, have honoured us by your presence today and we thank you for your support. Our observers from UNESCO and WCOTP who are our "old reliables" also deserve our thanks for their continuous co-operation.

Our Consultants, Mr. Jones from the U.K., Mr. Kinyanjui from Kenya, and our Asian regional representative at this workshop, Mr. Mendis from Sri Lanka, have all enabled this workshop to retain a pan-Commonwealth perspective and I thank them all. I specially thank our consultants for preparing our lead papers and for being able to attend our workshop at short notice.

To you all, too numerous to mention by name, we offer on behalf of the Commonwealth Secretariat our grateful thanks. We invite you to share with us during the next ten days, this exchange of experience and the search for ways and means of implementing policies and practical programmes in teacher education based not only on African experience but drawing from our own total Commonwealth wisdom in tackling an old problem in a new context.