

Foreword

There has seldom been a time when international trade has featured so prominently as a topic on the global agenda, and it is currently a principal focus for Commonwealth co-operation.

The meeting of Commonwealth trade ministers in London in early 2017 marked a very significant interest in the potential for trade among our member countries, and this is expected also to be a major feature of the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of the Government Meeting – the Commonwealth Summit being hosted by the United Kingdom.

An innate understanding and sense of commonality within the rich diversity of our member countries results in measurable ‘Commonwealth Advantage’. It is rooted in our shared language, the Common Law – which also happens to be the basis for international law, our similar systems of parliamentary democracy, administration and regulation.

Research we have undertaken at the Commonwealth Secretariat shows that bilaterally, Commonwealth partners tend to trade 20 per cent more, and generate 10 per cent more foreign direct investment inflows than would otherwise be the case.

So it makes good business sense for us always to be scanning the horizon in order to find ways of making even more of this unique Commonwealth asset, so that together we can grow prosperity and build resilience for the good of all our citizens.

Our Commonwealth Secretariat knowledge base has been acquired from years of pioneering collaboration with our member countries as they have become more integrated within the global economy.

The majority of Commonwealth countries are classified as small states or Least Developed Countries, or are located in disadvantaged regions. Lack of capacity hampers their efforts to participate more fully in the global trading system.

Finding new ways of developing competitiveness for these member countries, and creating environments that are conducive to the growth of small and medium enterprises, are important factors in improving their trade performance.

This publication considers emerging trade issues from the perspective of countries needing to build competitiveness and resilience, and offers insights and guidance on formulating policies on various emerging trade issues – particularly within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Whether we are considering global and regional value chains, or more specific areas such as ecommerce and the digital economy, the research and policy guidance drawn together in these pages, together with critical reflection on the economic and geopolitical forces, suggests that Commonwealth links and collaboration are likely to be major influences on the future trading arrangements for our member countries.

The Right Hon Patricia Scotland QC
The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth