

Preface



On Monday 9 March 1992, Commonwealth Day will be celebrated in the schools of the Commonwealth for the sixteenth successive year. It is by now a well-established day of celebration on the international calendar; an opportunity to recognise and enjoy the many threads which bind together our unique international association. Over the years students, teachers, parents, and national ministries of education have displayed great imagination and ingenuity in developing activities which combine pleasure and learning in support of international understanding. This popular handbook – now in its third edition – draws on this fund of experience. It explores the Commonwealth in ways which encourage involvement, participation and action. It is not a textbook but an ideas book to encourage the young to know and value and act on the principles which underpin the Commonwealth.

I am very conscious of the fact that if young people do not understand and participate in the work of the Commonwealth its efforts in support of a better world will be the poorer. In October 1991, Heads of Government, meeting in Zimbabwe, reaffirmed their support for the Commonwealth in the Harare Commonwealth Declaration – reproduced in this handbook – which spells out the challenges, the priorities and the opportunities for Commonwealth co-operation in the 1990s. Human rights, good governance, racial equality, the equality of women, human development, the alleviation of poverty, sustainable development and the quest for lasting world peace, are all issues deserving Commonwealth attention. But these are not just the concerns of governments; they are challenges to which we must all respond, including schoolchildren and students. The principles agreed by Heads of Governments are with us in our daily lives. Questions of a safe and clean environment, helping the poor and infirm, ensuring peace and justice, sharing knowledge and working co-operatively, find expression in our families, in our schools and in our communities. Young people can do much to contribute to the resolution of these questions. This book records what has been achieved and suggests what can be done. It is positive and it is practical, good qualities for the Commonwealth in the 1990s. It is in this spirit that I commend this handbook.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'A. K. K. K.', written in a cursive style.

Commonwealth Secretary-General