

MEDIA RELEASE: Be resilient: take immediate action for the 'world's greatest single challenge', Commonwealth told at international Climate Challenge Conference.

Video news release:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B99sotFuWzoWQUxDR2hySDNQTmc/view?usp=sharing>

2 December 2015

The need to be resilient and proactive in preparing for a radically changing climate is the priority for sustainable, smarter cities, according to leading experts at the dedicated Climate Change conference alongside the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2015 in Malta last week.

The Climate Challenge Conference, hosted by The Commonwealth Environmental Investment Platform (The CEIP) for Commonwealth business and political leaders, investors, academics and others with a mandate to address climate change, was a key event prior to COP21¹ to address climate change and unite a significant world group to come together and deal with the huge environmental challenges of this century.

Over 100 delegates gathered at the unique CHOGM 2015 fringe event to engage with climate resilience and the issues we face: Dr Michael Dixon, General Manager, Smarter Cities, IBM Corporation; Mikele Brack, Founding Partner, Urban Living Solutions; Dr Adrian Champion, a specialist in meteorology at the University of Reading; Josh Sawislak, Global Director of Resilience, AECOM; At the same event Commonwealth Argosy sponsored a special reception for the CEIP conference delegates to focus on the "Blue Economy" with addresses by Chris Donnelly, The Institute for Statecraft; and Sunil Shastri, Lecturer & Senior Tutor in Marine Policy, University of Hull.

Each speaker offered inspiring yet practical advice for Commonwealth countries that, combined, have a population of 2.1 billion people – almost a third of the world's population. The Commonwealth has an incredibly diverse population that spans across Africa, Asia, the Americas, Caribbean, Europe and the Pacific, with member countries offering some of the richest, poorest, largest and smallest countries in the world. This diversity offers a unique opportunity for a collaborative approach to climate change in terms of ideas, enthusiasm and investment.

Michael Sippitt, Chairman of The CEIP (the unique specialist environmental investment and collaborative platform for Commonwealth countries that aims to help them build smarter, greener and sustainable communities), says: "Climate Change is arguably the greatest single challenge facing the world today, looming over all our tomorrows.

¹ The 21st United National Conference on Climate Change, held in Paris 30 November – 11 December 2015.

"The Climate Challenge is not for the faint-hearted. Its implications do not make for happy reading. Nevertheless, it is reality. Action must be taken and it cannot be left solely to public investment. We must use the power of business and the engine of economic opportunity to sustainably address climate change. The Commonwealth provides an excellent ready-made platform for us all to unite in this challenge."

Dr Adrian Champion showcased the impact of increasing extreme weather due to climate change and its impact across continents unless change is catered for at a micro and macro level, while Mikele Brack highlighted the ability of international engineering, planning and design specialists to collaborate and create engaging, community-led sustainable solutions for towns and cities.

In his definition of the climate challenge in light of smarter cities, Josh Sawislak said: "Resilience is the ability to absorb and recover from change; it doesn't mean we can stop natural disaster but we can adapt and survive from it. However, if we don't concurrently deal with the sustainability issues then we'll make the problem so much worse that being able to adapt to climate change is no longer possible."

The CEIP Climate Challenge Conference addressed the most essential matter of making communities sustainable, fit for purpose and cost-effective in the long-term, that of engagement. Dr Michael Dixon suggested that we need to do better as individuals, businesses and leaders in engaging with and committing to the Climate Challenge.

He said: "Social media and mobile technology offers hugely valuable Big Data – the kind so highly prized by global corporates such as Facebook – that predict people's wants and needs in their community. We can harness this data to deliver smarter, sustainable cities but this has to be followed up with significant policy and investment engagement."

Sawislak claimed that salience or cultural engagement is the overwhelming 'key piece' in addressing climate change.

"I've heard the arguments against investing in resilience, that we 'can't even afford the infrastructure we need to keep up with GDP growth' - but can we afford not to be resilient? For example, the cost of a disaster is 4-10 times higher than the cost of repairing the fallout (not including the loss of function or loss of life) and we know that our weather system is changing today – we have the data on that."

"If people don't believe the data and make better policy decisions, then we can't move forwards. In the end, it's not a science or engineering problem but a salient one. If climate change and resilience is not important to people they will do something else - if it's not big enough a problem, they will push it to one side. We have to get people to understand that climate matters are material to their life or business and that they can actually do something about them, to prepare for the future that's coming."

Sippitt adds: "Smart Cities are the epitome of the mindset we must adopt – the use of cutting edge technology and intelligent design to build in an environmentally sensitive, low-carbon and economically competitive manner. If we build these new cities, and expand our old ones, with such a long-term plan we can make cities that are more efficient, pleasant and sustainable."

The Commonwealth is a powerful tool to grow links between developed and developing nations. In the face of climate change and growing populations, solidarity and cooperation between nations, both at governmental and small, entrepreneurial levels will result in a secure future. The exchange of knowledge and collaborative partner links as well as investment opportunities is vital which is where The CEIP aims to benefit Commonwealth member countries.

Doing business between Commonwealth nations is aided by similar language, legal systems and values, and it is hoped that some member countries will not only become world leaders in addressing the Climate Challenge but key partners with less affluent nations, helping their communities and cities to be more resilient, economically robust and develop a culture of sustainability.

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Photographs from the event

Conference Speakers -

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Dr Michael Dixon, General Manager, Smarter Cities, IBM Corporation -

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Mikele Brack, Founding Partner, Urban Living Solutions -

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Dr Adrian Champion, a specialist in meteorology at the University of Reading –

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and Sunil Shastri, Lecturer & Senior Tutor in Marine Policy, University of Hull -

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Lord Howell, President, The Royal Commonwealth Society -

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Notes to Editors

The CEIP

The Commonwealth Environmental Investment Platform (CEIP) is a pan-Commonwealth network linking entrepreneurs and companies in the environmental sector to each other and to international investors. The platform is designed to facilitate trade and investment in sustainable technologies, to improve international awareness of developments in green technology and sustainability issues, and to support low carbon economic growth across the Commonwealth.

The CEIP has been developed in alliance between the Royal Commonwealth Society and Forbury Investment Network.

CEIP has established regional hubs across the Commonwealth, each independently managed to coordinate the needs of local entrepreneurs, businesses and investors. Each hub is connected to the central CEIP website, a secure location to enable a community of interest in environmental technologies through:

- Identification of and encouragement to entrepreneurs with technologies requiring investment
- Linking business proposals with prospective investors or entrepreneurs in other Commonwealth locations to maximise investment and trade opportunities
- Sharing news, events, research and reports published by CEIP members across the Commonwealth.

For information on CEIP regional hubs, or become a member of CEIP, please visit www.theceip.com.

Commonwealth Argosy Ltd

The Commonwealth Argosy is an international commercial initiative, capitalising on the fast growing potential for increased trade within and on behalf of the Commonwealth. Our aim is to promote and strengthen business opportunities primarily for the SME and private company segment.

Commonwealth Argosy Ltd is primarily an events and expert network business with a portfolio of B2B and B2G events within its Argosy Calendar. It also offers events delivery and networking solutions to clients through a fee based membership of the Argosy Club.

Operating through three specialised subsidiaries the Commonwealth Argosy delivers events and membership; the online retailing of high end Commonwealth produced merchandise; and in due course a ship based events venue.

The Argosy group also supports the Commonwealth Argosy Foundation focused on the protection and sustainable development of the maritime environment. For further information please visit www.commonwealthargosy.com