



Press Note: Commonwealth Day Observance, Monday 10 March 2014

**Malala Yousafzai to join HM The Queen for Commonwealth Observance at Westminster Abbey**

On Monday 10 March, Her Majesty The Queen and Their Royal Highnesses The Duke of Edinburgh, The Prince of Wales, The Duchess of Cornwall, The Earl and The Countess of Wessex will mark Commonwealth Day in Westminster Abbey. The Observance will celebrate the 2014 Commonwealth theme 'Team Commonwealth'.

Speakers will include inspirational campaigner, **Malala Yousafzai**, one of Great Britain's most successful Paralympians, **Baroness (Tanni) Grey-Thompson** and Olympic gold medalist, **The Lord (Sebastian) Coe**.

The critically acclaimed MOBO award winner and Brit nominee, **Laura Mvula** will perform and a poem - specially commissioned for Commonwealth Day - will be read by South African writer and performance artist, **Phillippa Yaa de Villiers**.

The Observance, Britain's largest annual inter-faith gathering, will be attended by nearly 1,000 children. Each young person present in the Abbey – including those presenting posies to The Queen, Duchess and Countess – will have been involved in this year's Commonwealth Essay Competition which calls for creative entries on the theme 'Team Commonwealth'.

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**Notes to Editors**

**Commonwealth Day** is marked annually on the second Monday in March. It is a celebration of the Commonwealth's rich diversity and an opportunity to promote understanding on global issues, international cooperation and the work of Commonwealth civil society organisations. In 2014, Commonwealth organisations are focusing on the theme 'Team Commonwealth'. In the run-up to the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games, this theme expresses the spirit of friendship and motivation towards shared goals and values that characterises the modern Commonwealth. [www.commonwealththeme.org](http://www.commonwealththeme.org)

Celebrations to mark Commonwealth Day take place around the world. The Observance at Westminster Abbey in London is organised by the Royal Commonwealth Society (on behalf of the Council of Commonwealth Societies). [www.thercs.org](http://www.thercs.org)

**The Commonwealth Essay Competition** is the world's oldest and largest schools' international writing competition. Run by the Royal Commonwealth Society for 131 years, it promotes the values of the modern Commonwealth,

celebrates and nurtures the creative talents of young people and provides a platform for students to compete with their peers in the Commonwealth's 53 nations. The Commonwealth Essay Competition is run in partnership with Cambridge University Press. [www.thercs.org/youth/competition](http://www.thercs.org/youth/competition)

**The Royal Commonwealth Society** is the pre-eminent independent body working to promote the value and the values of the Commonwealth for the benefit of its peoples. An international network of individuals and organisations, the Royal Commonwealth Society is committed to improving the lives and prospects of Commonwealth citizens across the world. Founded in 1868, the Society is constituted by Royal Charter (most recently amended in 2013) and as a charity. It is non-partisan, is independent of governments and is supported by public generosity. The Society engages with its youth, civil society, business and governmental networks to address issues that matter to the citizens of the Commonwealth. [www.thercs.org](http://www.thercs.org)

**The modern Commonwealth** was established with 8 members in 1949. In 2014, it has 53 members with a total population of 2.2 billion. It is a voluntary association of governments and peoples, built around shared language, institutions, challenges, aspirations and values. Commonwealth countries work together to promote common values: democracy, freedom, peace, the rule of law and opportunity for all.

The Queen is Head of the Commonwealth. For further information, see <http://www.royal.gov.uk/MonarchAndCommonwealth/Overview.aspx>

## Contacts

Please note that Malala Yousafzai will not be available for interview at this time. Any media enquiries relating to Malala should be directed to: Edelman at +44 (0)203 0472585 or [malalapressenquiries@edelman.com](mailto:malalapressenquiries@edelman.com)

For all media enquiries about attending the Commonwealth Day Observance on 10 March, please contact Eleanor Lovegrove, Press & Communications Officer at Westminster Abbey by midday, Friday 7 March. T: +44 (0) 207 654 4926 / E: [eleanor.lovegrove@westminster-abbey.org](mailto:eleanor.lovegrove@westminster-abbey.org)

For enquiries related to The Queen and Commonwealth Day, please contact David Pogson in the Buckingham Palace press office. T: +44 (0) 207 930 4832 / E: [David.Pogson@royal.gov.uk](mailto:David.Pogson@royal.gov.uk)

For all other enquiries, please contact Joanna Bennett at the Royal Commonwealth Society. T: +44 (0) 7816 221 568 / E: [communications@thercs.org](mailto:communications@thercs.org) or Stuart Connick. T: +44 (0) 7718 476235 / E: [stuart.connick@thercs.org](mailto:stuart.connick@thercs.org)

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