



THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY



The Commonwealth

Video News Release

'Towards a Common Future' is the theme for Commonwealth Day 2018

Her Majesty The Queen, the Head of the Commonwealth, today attended the Commonwealth Service in Westminster Abbey. Organised by The Royal Commonwealth Society, the Service is the UK's largest annual inter-faith gathering. The Service was broadcast live on BBC One and across the BBC World Service, and can be viewed at www.bbc.co.uk

The Commonwealth theme for each year informs events to mark the day and helps to guide activities by the Commonwealth organisations throughout the year. This year's theme, 'Towards a Common Future', emphasises how the Commonwealth can address global challenges and work to create a better future for all citizens through the sub-themes of sustainability, safety, prosperity, and fairness. The theme ties in with that of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting to be held in London in April this year.

The Commonwealth Service featured a procession of Commonwealth flags, with a young flag bearer representing each of the 53 nations of the Commonwealth. Attendees were treated to musical performances from Ghanaian drum collective One-Drum, Ngāti Rānana London Maori Club, Portsmouth Gospel Choir, and British musician Liam Payne. Spoken reflections were given by award-winning spoken word artist Jaspreet Kaur, and Dr Andrew Bastawrous, Co-Founder and CEO of Peek Vision. The UK Prime Minister gave a Bible reading.

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Rt. Hon Patricia Scotland QC, also gave the Commonwealth Affirmation, calling on all those present to uphold and serve the values and fellowship of the Commonwealth:

'We affirm that every person possesses unique worth and dignity. We affirm our respect for nature, and that we will be stewards of the earth by caring for every part of it, and for it as a whole. We affirm our belief in justice for everyone, and peace between peoples and nations.'

'Joining together in kinship and affinity as members of one worldwide Commonwealth family, we acknowledge our shared inheritances, and celebrate the goodwill and mutual respect which inspire us to work with one another towards a common future that is fairer, more secure, more prosperous and more sustainable for the good of all.'

The day commenced with the annual wreath laying ceremony at the Memorial Gates on Constitution Hill. The ceremony, organised by the Memorial Gates Council, honoured the contribution of Caribbean service men and women during the First World War.

This year, Commonwealth Day also saw the UK launch of the Commonwealth Big Lunch. Taking place between March 12th and April 22nd, Commonwealth Big Lunches were created by the Eden Project in partnership with the UK Government as a way to encourage people to get together in their local communities to celebrate their Commonwealth connections through food.



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Following the Service, a Reception was held at Marlborough House – the home of the Commonwealth Secretariat – at which The Prince of Wales, The Duchess of Cornwall, The Duke of Cambridge, and the Commonwealth Secretary-General met with performers and selected guests from the Service.

This year, Commonwealth Day falls just two weeks before the start of the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games in Australia and five weeks before the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, which will take place in London from 16-20 April. This biennial Commonwealth summit will see the United Kingdom assume the role of Commonwealth Chair-in-Office from its current holder, Malta, which has held the position since November 2015.

---ENDS---

Notes to Editors:

BROADCASTERS, AGENCIES AND ONLINE VIDEO SITES - A free-to-use Video News Release is available for download below:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DWZnFLwDuj6KKYjUi1Opo3abJxJJkZC9/view?usp=sharing>

It contains overlay of the Memorial Gate ceremony, as well as grabs with:

- Baroness Patricia Scotland (Commonwealth Secretary-General)
- Dr Andrew Bastawrous, (Principal Speaker and founder of 'Peak Vision')
- Abass Doodoo, (Founder of 'One-Drum' and performer)
- The Hon. Dr Joseph Muscat (Prime Minister of Malta)
- Jaspreet Kaur, (Poet, performed in service)
- Otene Hopa(Chair of Ngāti Rānana London Māori Club)

The video is a Quicktime 1080i .mov file, with split track audio.

Photography from Commonwealth Day is available free-of-charge to download and republish from www.flickr.com/photos/comsec

Videos are available for broadcasters free-of-charge via Dropbox at <http://bit.ly/2mUgrxQ> and are loaded to the Commonwealth's Youtube channel: youtube.com/user/commonwealthtube

Messages and photos have been shared on Twitter and Facebook using the hashtags #OurCommonwealth and #CommonwealthDay.

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 53 independent and sovereign countries. Our members have agreed to pursue shared goals such as development, democracy and peace. These values are expressed in the Commonwealth Charter.

The Commonwealth spans the globe, including both advanced economies and developing countries, in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Americas, Europe and the Pacific. Our combined population is 2.4 billion, of which more than 60 per cent is aged under 30. Thirty members are small states, with a population under two million, of which 24 are island nations.

Most countries have similar legal and governance systems and a shared language. Although they have much in common, every country is unique.



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A network of more than 80 intergovernmental, civil society, cultural and professional organisations help countries to put Commonwealth values and principles into action.

Find out more: www.thecommonwealth.org/fastfacts

The Royal Commonwealth Society is a network of individuals and organisations committed to improving the lives and prospects of Commonwealth citizens across the world. Founded in 1868, it is non-partisan, is independent of governments, and is supported by public generosity. This year marks the 150th anniversary of the Society's founding. The Society engages with youth, civil society, business, and governmental networks to address issues that matter to the citizens of the Commonwealth. www.thercs.org @TheRCSLondon

The Commonwealth Secretariat supports member governments, and partners with the broader Commonwealth family and others, to improve the well-being of all Commonwealth citizens and to advance their shared interests globally www.thecommonwealth.org @commonwealthsec

Information about performers:

- **One-Drum** is a London-based collective of Ghanaian musicians, master drummers, dancers and performers. The artists and teachers emanate from the diversity of Ghana's rich ethnic traditions, each committed to creating inclusive, engaging work that uses cultural expression as a catalyst to change perceptions.
- **Ngāti Rānana** is a London based community group who practise and celebrate New Zealand Māori culture and traditions. Based in New Zealand House, the membership consists of people who have come from, or have a connection or interest in Aotearoa New Zealand, but call London home. Since their establishment 60 years ago, Ngāti Rānana have represented Aotearoa New Zealand through Māori Performing Arts, Kapa Haka and upholding Māori ceremonial traditions. They have performed at a wide range of events, festivals and commemorative occasions throughout the United Kingdom, Europe and the world.
- **Portsmouth Gospel Choir** are a dynamic and energetic student led gospel choir from the University of Portsmouth. They found national fame when they reached the finals of the BBC's Pitch Battles, amazing viewers with their harmonies and passion for the craft. Their founding principal relies on creating an atmosphere where people can actively express themselves through music whilst praising God simultaneously. They performed 'Bridge Over Troubled Water.'
- **Liam Payne** performed the song 'Waiting on the World to Change'.
- **Jaspreet Kaur**, better known as **Behind the Netra** for her poetry, is an award-winning Spoken Word Artist and History teacher from East London focused on sharing her thoughts on gender issues, mental health stigma, historical topics and positive social change. Jaspreet actively works with national governments, corporations and charities alike, such as TED, Westminster Interfaith Council and Action for Children, using her poetry to inspire and drive change. She performed her poem 'The Moment'.
- **Dr Andrew Bastawrous** is an eye surgeon, Assistant Professor in International Eye Health at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and Co-Founder & CEO of Peek Vision, a social enterprise which develops technology to bring better vision and health to everyone. He has worked and undertaken



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research in over twenty countries, including two years living in Kenya where he led a major eye disease study and the development and testing of Peek. Andrew has been voted one of the world's 30 most influential people in public health, and has published over 40 peer-reviewed articles. He is a TED Fellow, Rolex Laureate, Ashoka Fellow and World Economic Forum Young Global Leader.

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