

Team Commonwealth in a Changing World

Address to Royal Over-Seas League, by HE Rt Hon Sir Lockwood Smith

PhD, New Zealand High Commissioner

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- Thanks for your kind invitation to join you for lunch today. As a former MP, Minister and Speaker of the New Zealand Parliament, I've had some involvement with the Commonwealth, and am pleased to share a New Zealand perspective on this year's theme – Team Commonwealth.
- In 1949, when the London Declaration was issued, creating the modern Commonwealth, there were just eight members – Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa, Ceylon – or Sri Lanka, as it is now – and the United Kingdom.
- That select group has now grown into a unique organisation of rich, poor, large and small nations, strengthened by its diverse range of ethnicities, cultures and religions. The Commonwealth has been transformed from what could have been called an imperial gathering into today's free association of 53 independent states.
- Beyond the history, language, sporting, parliamentary, legal and institutional ties, it's the shared values that unite the Commonwealth's 53 members as a team. Values such as democracy, freedom, peace, the rule of law, and equality are what bind us together.

- That said, the Commonwealth has been going through quite a tough time in recent years. Major reforms have been needed to ensure it remains relevant and provides value to its members and its people.
- The process hasn't been easy, yet the reforms are necessary if the Commonwealth is to compete for stage time in a global environment increasingly crowded with regional and multilateral organisations.
- Because the reforms have been contentious it's proved difficult to always play as a team. There's been extensive debate on what the Commonwealth can offer and achieve that other international organisations can't. And there's been tension between the Commonwealth's work on governance and its work on development.
- This is of course a false dichotomy. The two concepts are entirely interdependent. A state must have good governance, with effective democracy underpinned by our common values, if it is to deliver sustainable development for all its people. Without that sound governance, development will be neither inclusive nor sustained.
- New Zealand has always been an active team member in the Commonwealth. We're committed to working with others to bring about positive change. Whether it's the Commonwealth, the UN, or the WTO, we recognise that New Zealand is too small and too far away to exert major influence on our own.
- We've therefore long recognised the benefits of playing in a team and working constructively within the multi-national framework, whether it

be on issues such as alleviating poverty or putting in place trading regimes that will benefit not only the developed world, but more importantly the developing world as well.

- This approach has had many benefits:

- It's given us better information and insights into global issues and processes for dealing with them;

- It's also given us access to the big players and involvement in international negotiations;

- And it's enabled us to work with a range of countries as challenges to our global interests arise – be that in the UN, the WTO, climate change negotiations or wherever.

- This approach also underscores our ongoing belief in the Commonwealth. To us the Commonwealth is a family of nations.

- Right after this lunch I will be departing for a conference, organised by the United Kingdom, at Wilton Park. It will focus on the future of the Commonwealth. It will seek to identify both the Commonwealth's strengths and areas for improvement. The conference is part of our collective responsibility to take forward the reform process.

- Reform, from my perspective, needs to start at the top with the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, or CHOGM, the Commonwealth's showcase. CHOGM 2013 in Colombo logistically ran well - it was a credit to Sri Lanka. That said, though, it's clear that the format of the Conference itself needs to be updated.

- International relations are now awash with conferences demanding the attention of our governments for one reason or another. CHOGM must therefore deliver real substance to justify the attendance of our Leaders.
- Two aspects trouble me. First, CHOGM has moved away from its original intent – for the Leaders of the Commonwealth, from diverse backgrounds and countries in varying stages of development, to come together to discuss, informally, the issues of the day.
- For a New Zealand Prime Minister, it was a valuable opportunity to hear views and perspectives of Commonwealth Leaders on variety of global challenges. The issues may not have been resolved, but the opportunity to discuss and listen engendered a sense of common ownership and responsibility to find a better way forward.
- CHOGM appears to have moved away from this format where the emphasis was on a simple dialogue, to a beast very large, complex and unwieldy.
- And therein lies the second issue – the CHOGM communique itself. It's become a very lengthy and unwieldy, catalogue of concerns of every member. Negotiating such a document is a massive undertaking and diverts too much time from substantive discussion of the real issues.
- It is divisive and neither articulates what the Commonwealth is currently working on, nor gives focus to what it's seeking to achieve.

There must be a better way, and I'm looking forward to hearing others' views as we look towards Malta for CHOGM 2015.

- One suggestion is to replace the Communique with a Chair's Summary of the Leaders' Discussions, highlighting any agreed actions, consensus reached, and issues requiring further thought and consideration. I would read such a document. I must confess that in 29 years as a politician, including 9 as a minister and 4 as a Speaker, I'd never read a CHOGM communique.
- CHOGM 2013 saw New Zealand re-join the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group. CMAG has a tough job. It is charged with upholding the Commonwealth's values, and it has its critics because it doesn't necessarily stamp its feet every time a member state struggles to meet all the values the Commonwealth espouses.
- That isn't the point of CMAG though. It isn't a collection of lawyers who measure the membership against a hard and fast treaty. It isn't a court that looks to pass judgement and impose punishment or censure upon a member for failing to live up to our collective ambitions.
- CMAG is a group of Foreign Ministers who engage with, and encourage members in the pursuit of Commonwealth values. We work together in recognition that together we are stronger - we can achieve more.
- In that respect, New Zealand was pleased with the outcome of the recent CMAG meeting in London. Fiji has been suspended from the

Commonwealth for many years for a grievous violation of Commonwealth values, a military coup and sustained military rule.

- Fiji has, however, come a long way since 2006 and taken significant steps towards democratic elections later this year. Those steps to restore Commonwealth values have been viewed positively by CMAG. And CMAG has agreed Fiji should transition from a full suspension, to a partial suspension, that is from the councils of the Commonwealth.
- Team Commonwealth wants Fiji back in the team. Fijian athletes can now compete again in the Commonwealth Games and the Fijian flag fly outside Marlborough House. It's a testament to the sustained engagement with Fiji of the Secretary General, the Commonwealth Secretariat and other Commonwealth partners, that we can now look forward to elections in Fiji on 17 September this year. After that we all hope to see Fiji resume its full place with the rest of the Commonwealth team.
- Fiji is, of course, part of New Zealand's own Asia-Pacific region. And while New Zealand is actively engaged in multilateral fora, we are also now deeply embedded in the Asia Pacific region.
- It wasn't always that way. New Zealand was once an outpost of Europe on the other side of the world. Most of what we exported came here. But we had to start looking to the Asia-Pacific region forty years ago when Britain, once our 'guaranteed' export market, joined the EEC.

- Today China and Australia are our top export markets, and all but two of our top 10 trading partners are from the Asia-Pacific region. With burgeoning middle class populations in that region, this is not a short term trend.
- Forty years ago, Asia had little in the way of economic architecture. Regional structures such as APEC and ASEAN, and a growing framework of regional and bilateral free trade agreements have changed all that. And integration into that rapidly evolving regional economic framework now underpins our political and security engagement with the region.
- New Zealand's experience in Asia offers useful insights for Europe's developments there. Like New Zealand, Europe is ramping up its engagement, prompted by the global financial crisis and an imperative to bolster relationships with a region experiencing rapid economic growth.
- New Zealand has a strategic interest in constructive European engagement with the Asia Pacific Region. However, we observe some difficulties:
 - EU dynamics mean differences among 28 Member States make it easy for Asian partners to pursue 'divide and conquer' tactics. That can result in the EU taking a more adversarial approach than is warranted.

- There's also been a tendency to assume the European model of regional integration is a blueprint which others, including ASEAN, should emulate.
- Moreover, the EU would strengthen its standing in the region by approaching engagement as an opportunity for two-way exchanges, rather than opportunities for Asia to learn from Europe
- New Zealand has encouraged the EU to focus effort on those parts of the Asian regional architecture that are open to them – bodies such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and the ASEAN+1 (EU) process. Strengthening bilateral relations would also help.
- New Zealand's successful engagement with Asia forms a major part of our value to the EU – particularly as we are a country within the region that shares EU values.
 - We understand the regional architecture, which is a different beast entirely from the European model;
 - Our Trade Agreements with China, Hong Kong and Chinese Taipei are unique. Together with our ASEAN regional agreement, and the Trans-Pacific (TPP) and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnerships, currently being negotiated, we offer the EU interesting incentives to enhance our trade and economic relationship.
 - Our experience of economic integration in the region demonstrates how it can support broader political, security and

foreign policy objectives. That offers insights for the EU, which seems to have struggled with an apparent conflict between pursuing economic goals and espousing political principles (such as support for human rights).

- These are powerful reasons why New Zealand and the EU should be working more closely together on trade and economic matters. It is not to the advantage of either of us that New Zealand remains one of only six WTO members with no trade agreement with the EU.
- The issue is particularly sensitive to New Zealand given our past historical associations.
- One of the most important days of the year to New Zealanders is ANZAC Day, 25th April, when the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps landed on the beaches at Gallipoli during World War 1.
- This year will sharpen the focus on the relationship between our countries as we join with the United Kingdom and other countries to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War. It had a profound impact on New Zealand and our national identity.
- I recently came across a startling figure from a survey the British Council commissioned. Only 35% of the British public were aware that New Zealand and Australia took part in the Great War.
- Our story has often gone untold even though New Zealand showed no hesitation in emulating Britain's declaration of war on Germany. In fact

New Zealand troops became the first to occupy German territory when they took over Samoa in November 1914.

- New Zealand at the time saw itself as part of the British Empire - where Britain went we went. There were of course other reasons why our young men signed up. There was the desire for adventure and travel, but ultimately it was the close ties with Britain and the sense of 'kinship' that led many to enlist.
- The total population of New Zealand in 1914 was just over one million. All told, 120,000 New Zealanders enlisted, of whom 103,000 served overseas – approximately half of our military-aged males. A total of 2,227 Māori and around 460 Pacific Islanders also served overseas with the New Zealand forces along with some 500 nurses.
- By the end of the war we had incurred a casualty rate of some 60 percent, the highest of any Commonwealth country. On New Zealand's 'darkest day' at Passchendaele on 12 October 1917, we suffered 845 deaths – on a population basis that was huge.
- Like the UK, New Zealand also lost national heroes, such as Antony Wilding. He'd won 11 major men's singles titles, including Wimbledon, in consecutive years from 1910 to 1913. On the advice of Churchill, Wilding joined the Royal Marines at the outbreak of the war, and then attached himself to the Intelligence Corps. He was moved to the front on 2 May 1915 and was killed seven days later.

- And in a nation where rugby is the national game, no name evokes the spirit of service and the story of New Zealand's commitment, more than that of Dave Gallaher the first captain of the All Blacks.
- A gifted player, Gallaher earned 36 international caps and led the All Blacks in the 1905 tour of the UK where his team won all 23 games bar one, a 3 - nil loss to Wales. It's said a winning All Black try was disallowed because the referee was too far behind the play and the Welsh players had dragged the try scorer back from the line by the time he arrived.
- Well beyond the age of conscription, Gallaher was killed in action at Passchendaele in 1917 at the age of 43, joining two brothers already killed.
- Undoubtedly, over the next four years you will hear similar stories and a lot about the causes and effects of WWI, of specific military battles and blunders, of the Western Front and of the ANZACS at Gallipoli.
- Something that is not always widely remembered, though, is the relationship New Zealand forged with the UK here on the Home Front - here in England.
- From April 1916, New Zealand had more men in England than in France. Our men were in hospitals, at training camps, on leave, or waiting to be transported home.
- There were three major New Zealand hospitals in the UK - Brockenhurst, Codford and Walton-on-Thames. New Zealand training

camps were also established across England – at Bulford and Ewshot in Staffordshire, at Grantham and at Christchurch. These English communities 100 years on still remember the contribution made by New Zealand to the war effort. Annual Anzac Day services, streets named after New Zealand places and Kiwi corners created in Churches, are all reminders of the enduring links formed.

- The New Forest, in particular, was a very special place for New Zealanders to convalesce. They felt at home there although the English Ale came as a bit of a shock - not just because it was warm, but because it was a lot stronger than the Danish larger available in Cairo. Wheel barrows were apparently employed on numerous occasions to transport New Zealanders from the local pubs back to hospital.
- The centenary will undoubtedly be an opportunity to reflect on the bonds between the UK and New Zealand created by the events a century ago, and our shared sacrifice.
- Time has wrought change. Over the last 100 years, both our countries have developed new linkages: the UK in Europe and New Zealand in the Asia Pacific region. We both, however, are still bound together through the Commonwealth.
- New Zealand's British foundations have evolved under the influences of our Maori culture, immigration, particularly from Asia, and from our unique geography, but the spirit of 'kinship' that existed 100 years ago lives on today in so many ways.

- While we in New Zealand now have a much more confident sense of our own unique identity and most no longer call Britain home, our friendship and family connections, rather than having receded over the years, are constantly being strengthened.
- We work closely with your country. It underscores how important it will always be for countries such as New Zealand to work with others. It's why the concept of 'Team Commonwealth' will remain as relevant now as it has been in the past.