

# **Commonwealth Address**

Westminster Abbey

14 March 2016

As a Ghanaian, who feels very much a part of the Commonwealth family, it is both a privilege and a pleasure to speak here today

The Commonwealth has a unique place and role within the international community.

It harnesses the creative energy, traditions and values of more than two billion people around the world.

It strongly promotes democracy, good governance, human rights and sustainable development.

These represent the interdependent pillars of any fair and healthy society as there can be no peace without inclusive development and no development without peace. And no society can long remain prosperous without the rule of law and respect for human rights.

As well as building and strengthening invaluable links between member countries and their citizens, it also provides practical support from election monitoring to promoting trade and security co-operation. Education, at school and at university level, is a further area where the rewards of closer ties and cooperation, are ours to seize.

Today, the Commonwealth stands as a confident, modern, multicultural and proudly inclusive organisation.

Let me dwell on the word inclusive for a moment because it has a central place in the Commonwealth's founding document.

This puts the people at its heart and declares that plurality and diversity are its greatest strength.

It also means that we must constantly strive to ensure that no child, woman or man is excluded or left behind.

These are enduring principles which not only bind us together as citizens of the Commonwealth but are absolutely critical for our collective ambitions for our world

It has never been more important for the Commonwealth to stress the bonds of human compassion and solidarity that unite us across the divides of race and religion, gender and geography.

It is also why I am so pleased to see that the Royal Commonwealth Society has brought together so many young people to enjoy this celebration.

They represent the more than one billion young people who provide our greatest hope for the future.

We must trust and nurture them in the timeless values of the Commonwealth.

We should be confident that, if we provide them the opportunity, they will continue to build on what has been achieved.

No individual has made a greater contribution to these achievements than Your Majesty

You have shown an unwavering and steadfast devotion to this grand project.

We are greatly honoured and deeply grateful for your extraordinary commitment to its people.

I would like to express my best wishes to you, and your family, in the year in which you celebrate your 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Let me conclude by thanking Secretary-General [Kamalesh] Sharma for his invaluable service and welcome his successor Baroness Scotland.

Finally, may I also extend my best wishes to all members of the Commonwealth.

We can go forward in the confidence that history has shown how much more we can achieve together.

Thank you