

# Welcome Remarks

by the Speaker of the House

The Honorable Bridgid Mary Annisette-George

in celebration of Commonwealth Day

Monday, March 14, 2016



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**Salutation**

- The President of the Senate, The Honourable Christine Kangaloo;
- Ministers of Government;
- Members of the Executive Committee of the Trinidad and Tobago Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association,
- High Commissioners and Honorary Consuls of Commonwealth Countries resident in Trinidad and Tobago or their Representatives;
- Representatives of the Institute of International Relations U.W.I St. Augustine;
- Teachers
- Specially invited Guests and our Students;
- Members of the Media; and
- Staff of the Office of the Parliament

**Good Morning!**

I am privileged to welcome you to the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago on behalf of all Members of Parliament and the Staff of the Parliament to share in a day of celebration of Commonwealth Day 2016, with 52 other nations (some of which are represented this morning through their High Commissioners and Honorary Consul) and approximately 2 billion persons worldwide.

This year's celebrations are being commemorated with the theme

***“An Inclusive Commonwealth”.***

**What does An Inclusive Commonwealth mean and why is it significant to us?**

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The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Kamalesh Sharma in explaining the significance of the theme stated as follows:

“An Inclusive Commonwealth refers to the values of tolerance, respect and understanding, as well as equity and fairness set out in the Commonwealth Charter and the richness of the Commonwealth as a family of nations in which each member state is valued equally and has an equal voice”

The Secretary General further underscored the relevance of the Commonwealth in the context of globalization the digital revolution and interdependence which have had the effect of making the world not only a small place but can lead to “a colliding world”.

There could not be a more poignant statement than his conclusion that

“The strengths of the Commonwealth were never needed more to assert fairness in global outcomes and trust in the richness of our human identities”

*For the realisation of Commonwealth inclusiveness for its citizens and by extension global inclusiveness, there are many challenges to overcome. As youth, you shall have the opportunity to be active game changers and must find real solutions to problems such as*

- ***Conflict and violence;***
- ***Statelessness and refugees;***
- ***Crimes and violence against children and women***
- ***Trafficking in persons and acts which support modern day slavery;***
- ***Equality and the rights for ALL regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender***
- ***Hate crimes and domestic abuse; and***

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- *Pestilence and diseases,*
- *Famine and*
- *Depletion of natural resources.*

*Additionally it shall fall to you to work in conjunction with other nations to achieve the targets- all 169- of the 17 SDGs by 2030. You shall be the leaders of your communities, institutions and members of Parliament by then.*

*It is the co-operation and mutual respect engendered by time revered alliances such as the Commonwealth that shall be the drivers in finding the solutions which confront us now and if unresolved which shall be inherited by you.*

I urge you not to categories today's events as purely an event of historical value but embrace the lessons from the successes of the collaboration, of diversity, respect and co-operation- having worked for the common good and consider how as youth you can utilize the values of the Commonwealth to the imperatives of the new world common good while also incorporating harmony, sensitivity, and respect in your daily interactions.

May I ask each of you in a demonstration of your personal acknowledgement of the values of the Commonwealth to stand, extend your hand to the person to your immediate right committing to the strength in diversity, mutual respect and co-operation.

To an inclusive Commonwealth!

Happy Commonwealth Day 2016!