

## **Participating in the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London, President Sirisena highlighted Sri Lanka's blue-green growth strategy for sustainable development**

President Maithripala Sirisena represented Sri Lanka at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and participated in connected meetings and events in London from 16 to 21 April 2018. The formal Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting consists of the pre-meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the formal meeting of the Heads of Government and the Leaders Retreat. President Sirisena was accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Tilak Marapana.

Participating at the Heads of Government Meeting, President Sirisena highlighted Sri Lanka's strategy to achieve sustainable development by pursuing a balanced inclusive green growth (BIGG) path. The President joined the leaders of the Commonwealth to adopt the Communiqué "***Towards a Common Future***" in which the countries of the Commonwealth affirmed unwavering commitment to the Commonwealth's Fundamental Political Values reflected in the Charter, and pledged action on important areas such as gender equality and inclusion, strengthening democratic institutions and promoting peace, strengthening the multilateral trading system, expanding investment and boosting intra-Commonwealth trade, promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, addressing vulnerability and climate change, sustainable development of the oceans, sustainable use of energy and natural resources, health, education, cyber security, preventing violent extremism, human trafficking and child exploitation, and serious and transnational organized crime.

The Leaders also adopted the ***Commonwealth Blue Charter***, agreeing on a bold and coordinated push to protect the ocean from the effects of climate change, pollution and over-fishing. ***Sri Lanka pledged in this context to initiate collaboration on mangrove restoration*** while several other countries similarly pledged to spearhead other areas relating to the oceans such as blue economic growth, restoration of coral reefs, and action on ocean acidification caused by man-made CO2 emissions. Sri Lanka also pledged to support the ***Clean Oceans Alliance*** led by the UK and Vanuatu to make oceans free of plastics.

Another important document adopted by the Heads of Government was the ***Commonwealth Cyber Declaration*** that reflects Commonwealth values and sets out a common commitment to an open, democratic, peaceful and secure internet, respecting human rights and freedom of expression. The Declaration agrees to increase cooperation across the Commonwealth and undertake national cyber risk assessments by 2020, with a view to developing or strengthening national cyber security strategies and implementing action plans. With the goal of expanding investment and boosting intra-Commonwealth trade to USD 2 trillion by 2030, the Heads of Government adopted a ***Declaration on the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda for Trade and Investment*** which includes mandating the Commonwealth Secretariat to develop an accompanying action plan that considers capacity building and hard and soft connectivity.

Addressing the ***Commonwealth Business Forum*** on the theme '***Attaining SDGs: aligning business, society and governments***', President Sirisena emphasized good business practices as a catalyst for peace and good governance which will reflect social responsibility and uphold the rule of law.

The Minister of Finance and Mass Media Mangala Samaraweera and the Minister of Industry and Commerce Rishad Bathiudeen represented Sri Lanka at related events and forums held on the sidelines of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. These included the Commonwealth Business Forum where Sri Lanka's participation included 40 small and medium entrepreneurs who used the Commonwealth as a platform to showcase Sri Lanka's trade and investment potential. The highlight of the event was the launching of the brand "***Island of Ingenuity***" focusing on creativity and skills in the IT-BPO sector. Sri Lanka also joined India, Mauritius, and Malta to set up the ***Small States Trade Financial Facility***, with the Minister of Finance and Mass Media Mangala Samaraweera signing the Commonwealth Small States Trade Finance Facility Agreement representing Sri Lanka.

The next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 2020 will be hosted by Rwanda.

The CHOGM Communiqué and all the other documents adopted can be accessed online at: <http://thecommonwealth.org/newsroom>

*Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

*Colombo*

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