

17 November 2016

Statement of the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, the Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC,

On the occasion of the Twenty-Second Conference of the Parties (COP22) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Marrakesh, Morocco

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I speak for the Commonwealth collectively, a family of 52 member states - among them countries in all continents and oceans that are highly vulnerable to climate change.

Our priority is to move from agreement to action.

Small islands, threatened by rising sea levels, and larger states vulnerable to flooding or desertification, share the Commonwealth advantages of a common language, Common Law, and closely related systems of governance.

These similarities enable us to work together without distraction, and get straight to the nub of issues.

High on our agenda for thirty years has been the impact of climate change. This longstanding focus bore fruit a year ago when our biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting assembled in Malta.

Days before COP21, our member states - in their rich diversity - agreed to set ambition high, and paved the way for the Paris Agreement.

One practical and distinctively Commonwealth contribution is technical support offered by our Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub.

A month ago we convened a ground-breaking and dynamic gathering on Regenerative Development to Reverse Climate Change.

It brought together biologists, ecologists, oceanographers and regenerative development specialists to consider ways of reversing the human impacts of climate change.

Our focus was on developing positive action for the living world to restore climate balance - including biomimicry, permaculture, ecological engineering, and circular economies.

It is through such pioneering approaches, I believe, that - as on so many occasions in the past - the potential of our Commonwealth networks and meetings will be mobilised to lay the foundations on which progressive global consensus can be built to create a safer and more sustainable future for all.