

**SONNY LEONG | COUNCIL FOR EDUCATION IN THE  
COMMONWEALTH**

22 MAY 2019

Thank you so much.

HE Dame Cecile La Grenade, Governor General of Grenada

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

Dr Richard Olds, President, St George's University

Dr Glen Jacobs, Provost, St George's University

Welcome to Grenada!

I am delighted  
to be with you today  
and thank you to all of you  
for taking the time  
and making the effort  
to come to Grenada.

To be fair,  
once you get here  
and experience the warmth of the Grenadians –  
it is not the greatest hardship!

Our Commonwealth is 70 years old.

It may be well beyond pensionable age,  
but we are not retiring!

In fact, our family of nations  
is only becoming ever more youthful,  
energetic and purposeful  
in its outlook.

And so I am thrilled  
that we are joined this week  
by my dear friend,  
the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth –  
The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC

We are eternally grateful for your presence  
here In Grenada - thank you.

Four years ago,  
in seeking to serve through this Office,  
you ran on the message  
that you would seek to lead  
a Commonwealth built on all our talents.

It is a demonstration  
of your commitment to that goal  
that you are here  
to take part in our discussions –  
which will no doubt be challenging  
and energizing in equal measure –  
on how we can catalyse,  
drive and enable student success  
in the coming decade.

It's an urgent question,  
because we live in a world of urgency.

A vortex of progress and pressure,  
of transformative innovation and rising nostalgia,  
of increasing connectivity and deepening division.

It can be quite easy  
to be overwhelmed and become paralysed –  
to merely exist in today's reality,  
as events and the dynamics shaping the world  
swirl around you.

The very nature  
of how we live will change.

And the very destructive changes  
to the nature we have taken for granted  
threaten our lives –  
and our children's lives.

It is a world and future of duality:  
full of challenge  
and yet rife with opportunity.

In that context –  
what does success look like?

On what foundations  
does success rest?

What kind of education  
do our students and people need  
in order to prepare them for the future?

I am excited to hear all of your thoughts,  
ideas and perspectives  
on the answers to these questions –  
and how we can, together,  
deliver those solutions across the Commonwealth.

If I might just offer one short observation,  
that I hope will be a valuable contribution to the debate.

The greatest danger to success in this vortex –  
as an individual,  
as a society  
and as a global community –  
is inaction.

Paralysis.

That feeling that we can't do anything  
in the face of the huge, rapid forces  
changing the world.

In the coming days,  
we will undoubtedly discuss the skills and knowledge  
that we need our students to develop

in order make the most  
of the opportunities.

That is, of course, vital.

But we must remember  
that the ability to act is not sufficient  
for action to take place.

The driver and direction of action  
is our motivation, our objective  
and our purpose.

Our mindset and attitudes.

At a time when our minds are assailed  
by more information and input  
than ever before,  
we need resilience,  
we need courage,  
we need open-ness,  
we need generosity of purpose,  
we need to value our shared humanity.

We need those mindsets and attitudes  
to be deeply held by our students  
if they are to master the AI,  
robotics and technological revolution  
in order to make it serve humanity  
and the people economy.

We need those mindsets and attitudes  
to be deeply held by our students  
if we are to fight deepening divisions  
and tensions in our society,  
by working towards the open embrace  
of different cultures, faiths and communities.

And we need those mindsets and attitudes  
to be deeply held by our students  
if they are to take the action required  
to go beyond combatting climate change  
to working on climate repair –  
a vital and urgent task.

Without them,  
we know that we leave our future to chance.

We leave it to those  
who are motivated by the malign,  
by narrow self-interest and the desire  
to exploit both inaction and our deepest fears.

We see it in the use of technological advances  
to drive shareholder benefit  
at the expense of workers.

We see it in the inaction  
of far too many in the world  
in the face of a planet in peril.

Not in the future, but now.

We have experienced it,  
too tragically and with deep sadness,  
as the purveyors of hate  
make their online dominion reality  
through atrocities targeting the innocent.

There is barely a country in the Commonwealth  
untouched by the devastation of terrorist hate.

And we stand with our sisters and brothers  
in Sri Lanka and New Zealand.

Your suffering spurs us on to act  
with even greater determination  
to not leave our future  
up to those who pursue dystopia and division.

And that is what we –  
and our students –  
need most of all.

Determination.

The mindsets and attitudes  
that motivate us  
from within to create the world  
we want to see.

A world where humanity comes first.

A world where your success is my success.

A world we can pass onto our children.

After all – that is what makes the Commonwealth  
so incredibly special.

Not simply the assets our members bring to the table.

Our true potential as a Commonwealth  
is held in the values of the Charter  
that each of our member nations  
has chosen to commit to.

In our purpose.

In our work to make those values reality  
in the everyday lives of our people.

It is what spurs us to action.

And as that is true for the Commonwealth,  
it is also true for our students.

Their potential is held in the values,  
mindsets and attitudes that they hold –  
the purpose for which

they work in their lives.

It is what will enable them to act,  
even in a world as complex as this.

Our own purpose as educators  
must be to unlock that potential,  
for the betterment of the lives  
of all people of the Commonwealth –  
and so I am delighted to work with you  
in the coming days  
to make sure that we make that vision reality.

Thank you and have a wonderful Conference.