

Prime Minister Brown's Commonwealth Day Message, 10 March 2008

I am delighted to be providing this message for Commonwealth Day on 10 March - the day when the UK reflects on its Commonwealth membership and heritage and looks ahead to the challenges facing us and our fellow member states.

This year's Commonwealth Day theme is "The Environment Our Future" - it could not be more relevant - we all have to take urgent action today to guarantee tomorrow's future. Commonwealth States share the same dilemma. We need to find a way to grow and develop our economies without destabilising the climate and destroying the foundations that underpin our growth, stability and development. The only way out is, together, to build a low carbon global economy as soon as we can.

I was delighted to be able to take part in key climate change discussions with my fellow Heads of Government at The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM) in Uganda in November. The Commonwealth brings together a critical cross-section of countries - industrialised countries with significant greenhouse gas emissions, emerging economies, energy producers and poor and vulnerable states, some of whose very survival is directly threatened by climate change.

We launched the Lake Victoria Action Plan on Climate Change at CHOGM - a major statement from a quarter of the world, highlighting the urgency and gravity of the situation. I was delighted that we were all able to commit, in the action plan, to pursuing ambitious solutions, in particular through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to promoting a better understanding of climate change and its impact and in addressing mitigation and adaptation challenges.

I look forward to working further with my fellow Commonwealth Heads of Government over the coming months to help deliver our Action Plan and achieve these goals. In particular, I want to continue to develop a shared understanding of what climate change will mean for our economies and societies; to draw on Commonwealth networks, so that we can explore the economic, social, and health opportunities, particularly for developing countries, of a transition to low carbon, and to continue to build on the consensus we reached at CHOGM amongst Commonwealth States that a key component of our collective response must be to agree an ambitious and effective post-2012 global framework to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and a shared vision of what that agreement should include.

I wish you all a very happy Commonwealth Day.