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## **FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE: DELIVERY OF COMMONWEALTH SUMMIT COMMITMENTS – UPDATE**

Further to the Government's response to the Foreign Affairs Committee report on 'Global Britain and the 2018 Commonwealth Summit' published in July last year, and my Written Ministerial Statement of 14 January, I enclose an update on delivery of Commonwealth Summit commitments and our other priorities and objectives for the UK's tenure as Commonwealth Chair-in-Office.

A little over a year ago, the UK hosted the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) and assumed the role of Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth. In addition to that anniversary, we have recently celebrated Commonwealth Day on 11 March and the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the London Declaration on 26 April, which established the modern Commonwealth as a free association of equal and independent countries.

My Ministers and I have made the Commonwealth a recurring theme in our work. On a recent trip to Ghana, I delivered a speech on 'A Connected Commonwealth' (this year's Commonwealth theme) alongside Foreign Minister Botchwey. The Minister of State for the Commonwealth, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, and the UK Commonwealth Envoy, Philip Parham, have overseen efforts to deliver the commitments made at CHOGM 2018. Lord Ahmad has explored with the Australian and Indian High Commissioners what more we could do to support smaller Commonwealth members. During the UK-Kenya Security Dialogue in March, he reached agreement with the Kenyan government on UK support for their national cyber security capacity review in fulfilment of the Commonwealth Cyber Declaration.

On sustainability, Lord Ahmad chaired the first ministerial meeting of the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance (CCOA) in Nairobi. He has taken the opportunity of various forums, such as our quarterly discussions with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), to promote CCOA, whose membership has now grown to 25 Commonwealth member states. CCOA members have pledged to take various actions to address plastic pollution of the oceans. The development of CCOA has been a cross-government effort, including DEFRA and its Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, Thérèse Coffey.

Making the most of the Commonwealth as a framework for multilateral cooperation, Lord Ahmad has convened several meetings of Commonwealth representatives in Geneva and New York to encourage use of the Commonwealth as a network to share information, best practice, and cross regional initiatives.

Lord Ahmad hosted a reception in New York to mark Commonwealth Day. This was attended by Commonwealth Permanent Representatives, high level representatives of UN agencies working on women in mediation, and women mediators from Commonwealth countries.

Lord Ahmad and Mr Parham attended the International Telecommunications Union Plenipotentiary Conference in Dubai, encouraging solidarity among Commonwealth members in elections to several ITU roles - including the re-election of Malcolm Johnson as Deputy Secretary-General.

There continues to be a welcome parliamentary focus on Commonwealth activities. Both Houses rightly want to hold the Government to account against commitments made at the CHOGM. The Commonwealth features in Parliament almost weekly. Baroness Goldie, on behalf of Lord Ahmad, tabled a motion for debate on 28 March on the continuing and evolving role of the Commonwealth and the United Kingdom's relationship with it. The honourable member for Rochford, James Duddridge MP, secured a back bench debate on the Commonwealth in advance of Commonwealth Day and the Minister of State for Africa delivered a statement in the House of Commons on day itself. Lord Ahmad has frequently updated interested members of both Houses.

You will recall that there was a strong focus on youth affairs at CHOGM. 60% of the Commonwealth is under the age of 30. In January, Lord Ahmad convened a roundtable discussion for Commonwealth youth leaders with the Commonwealth Youth Ambassador, His Royal Highness The Duke of Sussex. We are working closely with the Commonwealth Secretariat to incorporate the vision of these young leaders into Commonwealth plans and activities.

The enclosed report gives you a full update on progress in our efforts to fulfil CHOGM commitments. We now have a little over a year before we hand over to the Government of Rwanda. In this remaining time, the UK will continue work with our

Commonwealth partners to deliver a future which is fairer, more prosperous, more sustainable, and more secure.

Yes

Jeremy

**THE RT HON JEREMY HUNT MP**