

Candidature Statement  
of Senator the Honourable

# Kamina Johnson Smith

Jamaica's Candidate for the Post of  
Secretary-General of the Commonwealth







President of the 107<sup>th</sup> Session of ACP of Council of Ministers, Lomé, Togo

# OUR COMMONWEALTH

## A Family of Nations, Connected and Committed

I am truly inspired by the unique relationship that characterizes our Commonwealth, comprising fifty-four independent and diverse states, connected by shared core values and principles. The Commonwealth Charter provides a strong framework for promoting peace and prosperity, as well as modalities for cooperation among our member states, fostering friendship, fraternal dialogue and mutual respect.

As a candidate for Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, I am pleased to share my vision and my pledge to leading the Secretariat in refreshing and re-energizing the delivery of meaningful support to all our Commonwealth member states, in a rapidly evolving world. I believe strongly that we will ensure that we are not only connected, but committed to working together for shared prosperity, by considering:

## Our Common Aspirations

As a Commonwealth, we all agree on the critical importance of attaining the Sustainable Development Goals. Indeed, good progress has been made in many areas, but major challenges remain, including those created or worsened by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

In an increasingly challenging global environment, the Commonwealth must therefore be visionary and responsive, recognising always the diversity of our membership, comprising states at varying stages of development, some large and the majority small, some with vast resources and others with extensive vulnerabilities.





SIDS Advocacy at UN High Level Meeting on Climate and Sustainable Development

Drawing on our interconnectedness, I commit to working with members to generate more strategically targeted action, in response to the challenges faced by our 2.5 billion citizens - ranging from expediting the pace of recovery from the pandemic to effective action on climate finance and resilience, to supporting one another in times of crisis.

## Development Financing



The global development agenda is unquestionably a high priority for our entire Commonwealth family, not least of all the Commonwealth developing and small island states, which continuously experience extreme external shocks and natural disasters, some more intensely than others. Greater equity and access to financing for development, remain a critical need of developing countries - notably our LDCs, LLDCs and those graduated - that still experience unsustainable Debt-to-GDP ratios and have limited access to concessional finance.

In an interdependent world, every country, regardless of its development status, stands to benefit from closer and more inclusive collaboration towards meeting our common needs, as we all work to ramp up the recovery of our social and economic infrastructure, particularly as we emerge from the pandemic. Transformative action to address the risks and threats to social issues such as health care and education, as well as trade and investment, entrepreneurship and employment, must remain at the forefront of the agenda.

These priorities will require multifaceted action, within and beyond the Commonwealth, that can effectively move the development agenda forward. Whilst recognising the value of leveraging financing from traditional sources, I intend to examine modalities for developing a credible framework which allow not only the developed nations of the G7, G20 and international Financial Institutions, but also other potential partners with whom we share common values, to forge new relationships to help our membership access financing.





Delivering the SIDS perspective at G20 Foreign Minister's Meeting, 2018

## Small States

As a national and representative of a small state, I understand only too well the importance of advocating for small states, not only to be better heard, but also to be better understood. Apart from constraints on growth, experience shows that years of GDP can be wiped out by a single natural disaster – this reality of vulnerability must therefore drive us to use the collective voice of our Commonwealth to develop strong partnerships that can build our resilience.

I intend to strategically expand on what is envisaged under the Joint UN-Commonwealth Advocacy Strategy for Small States to be launched in Kigali in June, recognising the significant value that influential Global Champions can play in raising the profile of the critical development issues being experienced across the Commonwealth, and in advancing solutions to the specific needs of its respective regions.

## Gender and Youth Empowerment

I have personally championed the issues of Gender Equality and Youth Empowerment nationally and internationally, with encouraging outcomes.

There is ample evidence of the outstanding roles played by women and youth across the Commonwealth in meeting development objectives. However the pandemic has undoubtedly negatively and inordinately affected the well-being of women and youth in particular. It is therefore an even greater imperative that we promote gender equality and greater youth participation in development and governance issues across the Commonwealth.

It is notable that the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP), which provides support to one billion young people across regions, will celebrate its 50th Anniversary in 2023. With more than 60% of our population being under the age of 30 years, it is essential that we support our young people in practical ways to recoup human development losses and strengthen their capacity for achieving their personal and community development objectives. The keen interest of youth in various areas of development can certainly be harnessed to make this significant anniversary an opportune time to examine ways to advance the youth agenda for the ensuing decade.

## Technical Cooperation

The technical assistance provided by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC) has been a most valuable tool in delivering targeted support to member states over the years in areas in which the Commonwealth has a competitive advantage. Access to technology, innovation and building climate resilience must be amongst the priorities for the Commonwealth, and indeed for the CFTC. A more enabling environment for the effective use of the Financial Technology (FinTech) to promote business, trade and investment across the Commonwealth is also



essential, and can be supported through the Fund. Given the reduction in this source of critical funding, it is imperative that we urgently seek re-investment in the CFTC. In this regard, I am prepared to advocate for the rebuilding of and replenishment of the Fund which is a well-respected model for the delivery of development assistance that meets the specific development needs of our membership.

## Governance and Good Offices



All our stakeholders rightfully expect impactful delivery on the Commonwealth agenda, through unwavering commitment to best practices. During my engagement with member states, I have gained an awareness of the strong desire across all regions, for the Secretariat to do more to enhance the delivery of service to the Governments and citizens of our Commonwealth family. As expressed by many countries, this might be aided by the Secretariat expressly championing the principles of inclusiveness, transparency and good governance enshrined in the Charter, in the management of Commonwealth affairs.

This would mean that the organization should translate outputs to more results-based and measurable outcomes, that appropriately meet the needs of member states. To that end, the Secretariat should adopt transformative business systems and processes that are better suited to the effective delivery of our shared commitments, while remaining grounded in the fundamental principles and values established in the Commonwealth Charter.

While fully respecting the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of countries, the Commonwealth has a long-established and exemplary record of playing a meaningful good offices role, particularly with respect to the

intersection of political and social issues. The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) continues to play an important role in assisting states to treat with political issues that may arise within the membership. I propose to examine how a broader good offices role within the competence of the leadership of the Secretariat, can be strengthened, particularly for providing increased support to member states at the regional level, where the issues are better understood.

## Consultations



The nexus between sustained peace and political stability on the one hand and sustainable development and prosperity on the other hand, is undeniable. Accordingly, stakeholders across the Commonwealth expect deliverables that enhance their society's adherence to the principles of democracy, human rights and good governance, which impact their livelihoods and quality of life.

Re-investment in and re-energizing of the work ahead will call for increased engagement of the people of the Commonwealth, as well as inspiring their confidence in the capacity of the organization to meet their needs. I am committed to a process of consistent and dynamic outreach and consultations with a wide range of stakeholders - commencing first and foremost with the duly accredited representatives of Governments to the Board of Governors – to ensure that the work that is being undertaken remains in keeping with their priority goals and specific mandates.

To identify current and emerging priority needs, I intend to examine, in consultation with the Board of Governors, the early convening of a pan-Commonwealth forum, at the appropriate level, to chart a clear path forward.



## Work Programme

The Secretariat's Five-Year Strategic Plan (2021 – 2025) represents a useful framework for action. It has generated a call from member states for a more responsive and dynamic implementation process. Member states further recognize the importance of an effective monitoring and review system to ensure continued relevance of the Plan.

As a leader, I greatly value teamwork and I have every confidence that the specialized skills that reside within the Secretariat will be very much up to the task of optimum performance. At the same time, the organization would benefit significantly from a fit-for-purpose framework and sustainable human resource strategies that can foster dedicated and energized support for the important and urgent work agenda ahead.

Over the years, our governments have benefited significantly from the programmes of functional cooperation undertaken by the Secretariat, as well as the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth of Learning. I also recognize the important contributions being made by the over eighty accredited Commonwealth civil society and professional bodies. It is my understanding that these are all essential representatives of our Commonwealth family who should be facilitated in playing an even greater role in the delivery of the Commonwealth's myriad social, economic, and human development programmes.

I look forward to developing a process of increased collaboration among the leadership of the three Inter-governmental Organizations for better coordination in the pursuit of common objectives set out in the prioritized agenda of member states.





## My Commitment

I have had six highly active and productive years in multilateral diplomacy, focusing on both foreign policy and foreign trade policy, and am personally committed to the delivery of public service for development. I am fully dedicated to drive more purposeful and visionary action to promote and protect the principles and values of our Commonwealth family. I further commit to lead and manage transparently and efficiently the responsibilities entrusted to the Commonwealth Secretariat, working within an effective results-based management framework.

It is in this context that I seek the favourable consideration and endorsement of Commonwealth Heads of State and Government at their Summit in Kigali in June 2022, for my appointment as Secretary-General for the succeeding term of office. It is my hope that I will receive the confidence of member states in my competence and dependability to lead the work ahead with dedication, inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, and integrity.

*Kamina Johnson Smith*

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Minister of Foreign Affairs and  
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**Jamaica's Candidate for  
Secretary-General of the  
Commonwealth 2022**





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