

Commonwealth Day in Ireland

12/03/2018

Commonwealth Day was celebrated around the world today and the occasion was marked in Ireland with an event at the Australian Embassy in Dublin. The team at RCS Ireland were delighted to support this wonderful event that reflects the nation's enduring bonds with a commonwealth of 53 nations, 32 of which are republics.



With a large group of diplomats, politicians, journalists, academics, and other guests in attendance, the following remarks were presented by **Mr Simon Mamouny**, Deputy Head of Mission at the Australian Embassy in Ireland:

“ Ambassadors, Senators, Ladies and Gentlemen; First of all congratulations to the Irish Oireachtas Rugby team for their win against Scotland, although it was overshadowed by another Irish win over Scotland, which also brought Ireland the bigger prize of the Six Nations crown this year. Congratulations to Ireland and good luck in pursuit of the grand slam. We have apologies from Senator Frank Feighan. I understand he is attending the multicultural, multi-faith service at Westminster Abbey.

This Commonwealth Day precedes two very important events. Beginning next month from 4-15 April 2018, the Gold Coast in Australia will host the 21st Commonwealth Games. While continuing on the rugby theme, these games will see Women's Rugby Sevens making its Commonwealth Games debut. Another more important first, coming so soon after we celebrated International Women's Day, is that for the first time at a Commonwealth Games, an equal number of men's and women's medals events will be contested.



The second event happens straight after the games with the UK hosting the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in London from 16-20 April 2018. With the Queen in attendance and being hosted in London, this will be a very important meeting indeed for the future direction of the Commonwealth. We should not underestimate the power and potential of the Commonwealth. Let me indulge in a few statistics:

- The Commonwealth Games is the second biggest athletics event in the world
- The Commonwealth is home to 2.4 billion people
- 60 percent of that population is under 30
- 53 nations within the Commonwealth
- 30 nations of the Commonwealth are small states
- The difference in population of nations within the Commonwealth is vast, with India having 1.2 billion, the Nauru having 10,000

Though the Commonwealth needs to be relevant, the question is often asked, what use is the Commonwealth? I'll conclude with a few words from the Queen in her Commonwealth Day message, which I think make a powerful statement:

"We all have reason to give thanks for the numerous ways in which our lives are enriched when we learn from others. Through exchanging ideas, and seeing life from other perspectives, we grow in understanding and work more collaboratively towards a common future. There is a very special value in the insights we gain through the Commonwealth connection; shared inheritances help us overcome difference so that diversity is a cause for celebration rather than division."

With such a goal and undertaking, in light of the divisions facing us across the globe, let us work towards celebrating such diversity in the Commonwealth. Happy Commonwealth Day everyone."

Ireland's **Senator Neale Richmond** also addressed the event and delivered the following remarks:



"I am very grateful to Simon and the Australian Embassy for hosting us this year for Commonwealth Day. The Commonwealth offers Ireland another window to the world where we can build on existing relations to solidify our aim to be an island at the centre of the world.

The theme of a shared future for this year's Commonwealth Day is particularly relevant for Ireland as we embark on a new chapter of relations with our nearest neighbours in the UK.

Even though this relationship will be changed due to Brexit, our relationship will continue and we must try to build a shared future that is as close to our present as is possible.

A new approach to the Commonwealth would offer Ireland opportunities in many areas, particularly sport. Irish competitors from the North and the South such as Mary Peters, Barry McGuigan and Paddy Barnes have achieved great success in previous games. I look forward to cheering on the Northern Irish athletes at the Gold Coast games in April and one day hope to see Irish athletes from across our island competing in what are the second largest games in the world."

RCS Ireland is grateful to the Australian Embassy in Dublin for hosting this excellent event and we look forward to supporting Ireland's continued bonds with the Commonwealth of Nations.

RCS Ireland Team.

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