



SPEECH BY PROF. GEORGE A. O. MAGOHA, EGH, CABINET SECRETARY MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, DURING THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 21ST CONFERENCE OF COMMONWEALTH EDUCATION MINISTERS (21CCEM) HELD AT THE SAFARI PARK HOTEL ON 27 - 28 APRIL, 2022

Secretary-General of the Commonwealth; The Rt. Hon. Patricia Scotland QC

Minister for Interior and Coordination of National Government

Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts, Fiji and Chairperson, 20CCEM, Hon. Premila Kumar

Ministers from other Commonwealth countries

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Officials from the Ministries of Education in the Commonwealth

Officers from the Commonwealth Secretariat

Partners and stakeholders in education

Students and pupils

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen, as you are all aware, Kenya's Third President, His Excellency Emilio Mwai Kibaki passed on last Friday. He left an indelible mark in our country's education sector particularly by introducing Free Primary Education and presiding over the promulgation of our 2010 Constitution which institutionalised Free and Compulsory Basic Education for all children among many other reforms. We are therefore in the middle of a week of mourning and I would like to request us to observe a minute of silence in his honor before we proceed.

Thank you!

Ladies and Gentlemen, it gives me pleasure to welcome you all to this important Conference which brings together Ministers of Education from the 54 Commonwealth member countries as well as education stakeholders, to address educational priority issues towards the 2030 Agenda. I also take this early opportunity to thank the Commonwealth Secretariat for teaming up with the Kenyan team in the preparation of this conference.

The shock brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and other disasters have highlighted challenges that call for a rethink of learning and education, learning spaces and processes

such as engagement of parents and communities, access to quality learning of children and young people in from the most disadvantaged households, remote learning with connectivity and internet coverage, safeguarding concerns, especially for out-of- school children and adolescents, as well as increased workload and stress for teachers and school leaders.

The 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (20CCEM) held in February 2018 in Nadi, Fiji, brought together Commonwealth Education Ministers and senior government officials, stakeholders, educators and development partners under the theme of '**Sustainability and Resilience: Can Education Deliver?**' in the face of the climate change threat.

Ministers in Fiji reaffirmed that education is a fundamental human right and indispensable to the achievement of sustainable development. Ministers committed to ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and to promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, as well as to pursuing education for sustainable development.

Colleagues, in line with this year's theme of, "**Rethinking Education for Innovation, Growth and Sustainability Post-Covid-19**", the purpose of this meeting over the next two days will be to provide Commonwealth Education Ministers the opportunity to review and assess progress towards SDG 4 at regional and national levels; identify persistent bottlenecks preventing the achievement of the goal, and implications for the future of the education sector, including for learners and the workforce. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, we will assess the shocks of school closures and economic recession on learning recovery and education outcomes. As well as sharing and exchanging good practice strategies, solutions, and models for a sustainable recovery and to ensure preparedness of the education sector against climate related shocks, future pandemics, and disasters.

We will explore strategies to finance education, identify priorities, and formulate recommendations ahead of the upcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in June 2022 in Rwanda.

In short, in this meeting, we will acknowledge the importance of urgent and accelerated Commonwealth-wide action for post-COVID education systems recovery and achievement of SDG4.

At the end of this meeting, a ministerial statement will be produced that will outline policy options and commitments for member states to adopt, implement and share progress periodically, and key recommendations to Commonwealth Heads of Governments.

Finally, I wish to once again thank the Commonwealth Secretariat and all those that have partnered with us to make this conference a success. I wish you fruitful deliberations and prevail on you to find time to enjoy our Kenyan hospitality and the wildlife as you visit our National parks and other tourist destinations. I hope you will carry home a souvenir to remind you of your visit to Kenya!

Thank You