



## FOREWORD

### **Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon**

I welcome the publication of this Commonwealth Model National Plan of Action on Human Rights.

The Commonwealth is a unique organisation in the modern world. Our members belong for the reason that they share a commitment to certain values and principles. Fundamental human rights are part of the cement that binds us. Thus the Commonwealth is united by common values and common experiences, but also by its accommodation of the great diversity of its peoples, cultures and systems. Drawing on this commonality and difference, the Secretariat is an institution with the authority and pedigree to produce 'best practice' guidelines and models for the benefit of member countries. This publication has the benefit of Commonwealth-wide expertise and experience.

While each country will inevitably have different needs and priorities, we hold all human rights to be as indivisible as they are universal: for the Commonwealth, national-level implementation of human rights is as much about social and economic issues such as access to a basic education and to basic healthcare, as it is about civil and political issues such as freedom of expression or the right to a fair trial.

In pursuing the development – and *implementation* – of a National Plan of Action on Human Rights, a country would not simply be giving concrete expression to our shared Commonwealth values, but – just as important – it would be giving practical shape and effect to its own ideals and aspirations for progress.

I assure all our members that the Secretariat stands ready to assist them in their efforts towards a comprehensive and coherent strategy to better promote and protect human rights at the national level. I encourage our member governments to draw on the assistance of the Human Rights Unit in assessing and meeting their national objectives on human rights.

**Don McKinnon**  
**Marlborough House, London**  
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