

Foreword

Declarations about values and human rights are hollow if they are not backed by deeds. The Commonwealth's clear commitment to human rights – restated by its Heads of Government in Trinidad and Tobago in November 2009 – cannot be taken to mean that all its members have achieved them and are observing them to the letter. But it does mean a determined commitment to pursue the goal. All members are journeying on the same path, and the information we present here is testimony to the continued work being done across the Commonwealth to advance in upholding and protecting human rights.

Within the last two years, since the publication of the first edition of this volume, Bangladesh and Seychelles have established National Human Rights Commissions, and Mozambique, Papua New Guinea and Swaziland have taken big steps towards doing so. Lesotho, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles and Uganda have now ratified all eight of the main human rights conventions. The newest UN Human Rights Instrument – the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability – has also seen much support, with a quick succession of ratifications from Commonwealth members. However, there are still gaps: 17 of our members, for instance, have yet to ratify the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

These pages chart human rights commitments and achievements made by each Commonwealth country since 2008. The information documented has also expanded to include the ratification status of the seven human rights related Optional Protocols, and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

I hope it will be both useful and encouraging reading, as the Commonwealth continues on its collective journey towards the full realisation of one of its most cherished principles: the human rights of our citizens.

Kamalesh Sharma
Commonwealth Secretary-General
London, December 2010