

Letter of Presentation

8 August, 2007

HE Rt Hon. Donald C McKinnon
Commonwealth Secretary-General
Marlborough House
London SW1Y 5HX

Dear Secretary-General,

We feel very privileged by your decision to appoint us as members of this Commonwealth Commission on Respect and Understanding. The mandate for our work was given at the meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) in Malta in 2005, and we have prepared this report for you for presentation at the next meeting of CHOGM in Kampala, Uganda, in November 2007. We have worked as individual members from Commonwealth countries, and not as representatives of any government or any non-governmental organisation.

We have tried to explore and investigate the content and relevance of respect and understanding between different communities and groups, including faith groups, and the wide-ranging impact of these attitudes for harmonious and flourishing lives within Commonwealth countries. We have paid particular attention to the way group-based violence and terrorism often draw on incitement based on disrespect for each other and misunderstandings of the way the world works. We have also discussed how these evils can be confronted through civil routes, making greater use of the social rewards of mutual respect and fuller understanding.

Indeed, given the prevalence of group-based violence today and the way it tends to ruin human lives and damage peaceful communities, we have focused particularly on the constructive contributions of civil paths to peace in preventing violence and in promoting peace, based on the powerful relevance of respect and understanding. The policies we have discussed are, of course, primarily for possible use in Commonwealth countries, but we believe they may have wider use as well.

Our work has been much assisted by the helpful contributions of our Consultants, Professor Shamit Sagar and Dr Sarah Ladbury, and we are very grateful to them.

We would also like to take this opportunity to note the wonderful co-operation and assistance we have received from the Secretariat, particularly from Alexandra Jones, Daisy Cooper and Matthew Neuhaus. Doing this work satisfactorily within the strict limits of a relatively short time would have been impossible without their help. We would like to thank them.

Finally, we would, of course, like to express our gratitude to you for giving us the opportunity to work on this important problem and for guiding the inquiry through your visionary initiation. We very much hope that the CHOGM will find the Report useful for its deliberation.

Yours sincerely,



Amartya Sen



John Alderdice



Kwame Anthony Appiah



Adrienne Clarkson



Noeleen Heyzer



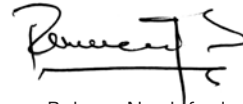
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