

British High Commissioner urges unity and co-operation in Commonwealth Day address

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On 9 March, British High Commissioner Paul Turner addressed Form Four students at King George VI School during their Commonwealth Day celebrations.

At the event, British High Commissioner to Solomon Islands and Nauru Paul Turner remarked on the contemporary significance of the Commonwealth, emphasising the enduring relationship between the Solomon Islands and the United Kingdom. This is founded on over a century of shared history. He also provided an overview of the Commonwealth's historical development.

He said whilst the Commonwealth had emerged from the former British Empire, it was today a free association of 56 sovereign states, covering a third of the world's population, all of which had a shared history and language.

In a short ceremony, a plaque of the late Queen Elizabeth II was presented to girls at the school, a fitting tribute to it also being International Women's Day in March 2026.

Turner outlined the modern challenges facing the Commonwealth, including working together on climate change and safeguarding human rights and democracy. He alluded to 'certain countries' moving in a direction of 'might is right' and said multilateral organisations such as the Commonwealth and UN were more important than ever in restoring international consensus and counter-balancing dominant powers.

The High Commissioner said the Commonwealth had its own "special character" as a "bridge" between different regions of the world, between large countries and small island states.

Solomon Islands Foreign Minister, Hon. Peter Shanel Agovaka is in London this week at the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers Meeting and Turner said he agreed with the Foreign Minister that the Commonwealth should step up its presence in the Pacific.

This week, the British High Commission in Honiara marked Commonwealth Day by visiting King George VI School and Florence Young Christian School. They spoke with Form 4 students about the Commonwealth, discussing its purpose and significance for Solomon Islands as a member state. High Commissioner Turner awarded the Commonwealth Walkway medal to both educational institutions, officially including them in the Honiara Commonwealth Walkway.

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