

High Commissioners' Banquet

Egyptian Hall, Mansion House
Wednesday 27th November 2024
Lord Mayor Locum Tenens
Alderman Sir William Russell

Your Excellencies, my Lords, Minister, Aldermen, Sheriffs, Chief Commoner, honoured guests...

Good evening, and on behalf of the whole City of London, a very warm welcome to Mansion House for the High Commissioners Banquet!

I am delighted to be representing the Lord Mayor this evening.

The Lord Mayor is currently overseas, as part of the City of London Corporation's programme of engagement with international partners on issues where UK financial and professional services have an important contribution to make... including sustainable finance, impact investment, and the Lord Mayor's theme of 'growth unleashed' – driving higher economic growth.

This international engagement – which is also undertaken by the City's Policy Chairman, Chris Hayward – always takes in a number of Commonwealth countries, and we have the honour of receiving many reciprocal inward visits here as well.

It is wonderful to see High Commissioners from so many Commonwealth nations here tonight, along with members of the wider Commonwealth family, and representatives from the education and business worlds.

The City of London Corporation is delighted to join forces once more with the Royal Commonwealth Society and the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council to hold this important annual event where we show our appreciation to the High Commissioners, with a celebration of our Commonwealth family of nations, and all that we can achieve together.

I am delighted that this evening we are joined by Nahjae Nunes, Nahjae Nunes, Co-Chair of the 2024 Commonwealth Youth Forum, and Lord Collins of Highbury, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Africa.

At last month's Commonwealth Heads Of Government Meeting in Samoa, our countries discussed the theme of "One Resilient Common Future: Transforming our Common Wealth."

Congratulations to Samoa on being the first Pacific small island state to host CHOGM.

At CHOGM, Commonwealth nations united in the pursuit of resilience, sustainability, and security in our shared future.

We look forward to hearing from Lord Collins on the British Government's plans and ambitions for the next CHOGM in Antigua and Barbuda.

The key to our resilient common future will be the young people of the Commonwealth.

60% of the 2.6 billion people of the Commonwealth are under the age of 30... so when the theme of tonight's event is youth leadership, this speaks directly to the majority of the Commonwealth population.

We are delighted to be joined by Nahjae Nunes, and we look forward to hearing your perspective as co-chair of the Commonwealth Youth Forum.

Here in the City of London, we are working with the Royal Commonwealth Society on several projects where young people are promoting a sustainable future.

The City Corporation's Natural Environment Board recently established the Youth Natural Environment Board, composed of students and alumni from across the City of London family of schools.

They are working with the RCS on the Clean Oceans Plastics campaign, where the City of London will host the UK leg of the Oceans and Rivers Relay next year.

And they are supporting the inaugural RCS UK academic conference at St Mary's University in Twickenham.

This year's Commonwealth Youth Forum was guided by the phrase "*Matimatiga* for a stronger tomorrow", using the Samoan word for imprint - as we should all consider what imprint we will leave on the natural environment and in the lives of others across the Commonwealth.

For our part, the City of London will continue to welcome our High Commissioners and support our Commonwealth institutions, so that as one Commonwealth, we build One Resilient Common Future.

Finally, may I propose a toast:

"The Commonwealth."