

## **Commonwealth Day Theme: "Opportunity through Enterprise - Unlocking potential with innovation and excellence"**

<p>Press Release</p>

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PRETORIA, South Africa, 11 March 2013 / PRNewswire Africa / - South Africa is pleased to join this important annual event to celebrate Commonwealth Day. As a member of the Commonwealth we, together with other members, celebrate on the second Monday of March each year to promote a specific global thematic issue of importance to the organisation, collectively and predicated on our vision for universal justice.

This year members agreed to focus on the critical issue of "Opportunity through Enterprise - Unlocking potential with innovation and excellence".

The spotlight in Commonwealth countries around the world will therefore focus on innovation and creative thinking to find opportunities to improve the lives of its citizens, especially the youth. It is our responsibility to identify ways and assist in preparing the environment in which talent and innovation can be supported and put to the best use possible for the benefit of all.

In South Africa we will use the theme to recognise achievement in areas such as social entrepreneurship, green and sustainable industries, and technological innovation and focus on ways to support enterprise, particularly in our young people, through nurturing youth enterprise by means of education and developing skills and employability.

We will focus on unlocking the potential of our youth and creating opportunities for those that will be the future leaders of our country. In November 2012, we celebrated the 7th Africa Youth Day with the theme of "Africa must deliver as one to empower African youth for sustainable development". This aspiration is relevant not only to Africa but all in the Commonwealth and connects with our 2013 Commonwealth theme.

Commonwealth Day symbolise the significance and gives us the opportunity to indicate our support for youth development. By celebrating this day on 11 March 2013, South Africa, in collaboration with other Commonwealth members, is joining hands in intensifying the development of our young people and creating new opportunities to unlock their potential.

As we accelerate the development of young people, South Africa is of the opinion that there is a need

to equally appreciate the efforts of Youth Workers as they are the frontline providers of services to the youth. Globally, the investment in the youth has become a necessity at a time when the youth are experiencing serious challenges, for example high unemployment, crime and health challenges such as HIV and Aids that is threatening the development agenda.

Young people hold the key to society's future, their ambitions, goals and aspirations and we can only prosper if there are dedicated efforts to invest in the youth. In South Africa we decided to focus on Youth Workers to close the gap and ensure that services to the youth are prioritised.

It therefore gives me immense pleasure to inform you that South Africa, represented by the Presidency, will host the first Commonwealth Conference on Education and Training of Youth Workers (CCETW). The Conference is being held in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat's Youth Programme, the University of South Africa and the National Youth Development Agency from 18 to 20 March, 2013 at the University of South Africa in Pretoria.

The CCETW is coming at a very significant time as our partner, the Commonwealth Youth Programme, celebrated 40 years of its existence as the world's only specialised intergovernmental development agency focusing on youth development. Reflecting on the significance of Educating and Training Youth Workers, the theme of the conference will be "Towards Professionalizing Youth Work". It seeks to engage various stakeholders from the public, private, academic, diplomatic corps and civil society sectors on the urgency and importance of recognizing youth work as a profession. It is envisaged that professionalisation of the career of youth workers would result, amongst others in formal education and training; increased research activity in the area of youth development; mastery of specialized knowledge; development of standards for education, training and practice; professional code of ethics; and protection of the interests of young people. Based on the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Development and Empowerment, this conference will serve as an interactive platform that is aimed at promoting a common agenda within Commonwealth member states and beyond.

It is expected that the conference will bring together participants from across the Commonwealth member states for three days to deliberate on 40 years of progress in education and training towards professionalising youth work. The targeted participants include youth work practitioners from government and non-government sectors, Ministries responsible for youth affairs, academics and researchers, young people, representatives of the national youth councils, international development agencies involved with young people and invited private sector companies.

South Africa trusts that with this conference we can contribute by providing the opportunity to unlock the potential of youth development and empowerment in South Africa and in the rest of the Commonwealth and show our commitment to, and support for, the new Charter of the Commonwealth

adopted on 14 December 2012. We fully agree with Article XIII of the Charter, which is so relevant to today's celebrations: "The future success of the Commonwealth rests with the continued commitment and contributions of young people in promoting and sustain the Commonwealth and its values and principles, and we commit to investing and promoting their development, particularly through the creation of opportunities for youth employment and entrepreneurship".

We wish all well during this year's Commonwealth Day celebrations.

Thank you.

ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION

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**SOURCE : Department of International Relations and Cooperation, Republic of South Africa**

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