

Commonwealth Innovations

October 2019

'Connected Commonwealth Space' launched on ICT and Innovation Open Day



The Commonwealth is embracing digital transformation in its work practices, which was showcased at the first ever Open Day on Innovation and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) held at the Commonwealth Secretariat's headquarters. Opening the event, Secretary-General Patricia Scotland underlined ICT, innovation and partnerships as being at the "core" of the Commonwealth's reform agenda.

The Open Day showcased six key initiatives designed to harness the power of ICT for sustainable development, by helping people to find valuable information, share and store knowledge, and collaborate more effectively on shared goals.

These include: Commonwealth Innovation Hub, Commonwealth Meridian Debt Management Platform, Legal Exchange Portal, Trade Connectivity Dashboard, Commonwealth Data Platform and the Commonwealth iLibrary.

During the event, the 'Connected Commonwealth Space' was launched in partnership with Bloomberg Philanthropies. This state-of-the-art meeting room will house a Bloomberg Terminal, which brings together real-time data on every market, breaking news, in-depth research, and powerful analytics, to help countries better understand what's next for their economies.

COMMONWEALTH INNOVATION NETWORK

A digital platform designed to tap and unleash the innovation potential of the Commonwealth.

Join [here](#).



Commonwealth Secretary-General's Innovation Award winners announced



Fifteen winners have been announced for the inaugural Commonwealth Secretary-General's Innovation for Sustainable Development Awards. They were selected by an independent panel of

judges, based on the impact or potential of their innovations to advance one or more of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

The Duke of Sussex, who is the Commonwealth Youth Ambassador, presented special prizes to the innovators at an event to celebrate the Commonwealth's 70th anniversary. Each of the 15 winners received a trophy, a certificate and £2,000 in prize money. The competition aims to help shine a spotlight on revolutionary ideas developed by Commonwealth citizens that could improve prosperity, protect our planet, promote peace and justice and encourage partnerships in Commonwealth countries.

For the full list of winners please click [here](#).

Nine Commonwealth countries move up in 2019 Global Innovation Index rankings

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) published its Global Innovation Index (GII) for 2019 recently. According to WIPO's analysis, a number of Commonwealth countries have improved their ranking from the previous year. India, Trinidad and Tobago and Rwanda have moved up five places since 2018. Pakistan and Nigeria have moved up four places in the index. Canada, Cyprus, Uganda and Ghana have all moved up one place while Malaysia, Jamaica and Bangladesh have all maintained their positions from 2018.

A few Commonwealth countries dropped down in this year's index, with Mauritius and Namibia slipping the most in the rankings. This year's GIi reveals that middle-income economies are increasingly competing with high-income ones as centres of innovation. Nonetheless, spending on research and innovation still remains concentrated in a few economies and regions, indicating that moving from a middle-income economy with innovation potential into an innovation powerhouse remains hard.

Read the full 2019 Global Innovation Index report [here](#)

Member country/ economy	Commonwealth rank 2019	Global rank 2019	Global rank 2018
United Kingdom	1	5	4
Singapore	2	8	5
Canada	3	17	18
Australia	4	22	20
New Zealand	5	25	22
Malta	6	27	26
Cyprus	7	28	29
Malaysia	8	35	35
India	9	52	57
South Africa	10	63	58
Brunei Darussalam	11	71	67
Kenya	12	77	78
Jamaica	13	81	81
Mauritius	14	82	75
Sri Lanka	16	89	88

Member country/ economy	Commonwealth rank 2019	Global rank 2019	Global rank 2018
Trinidad and Tobago	17	91	96
Botswana	18	93	91
Rwanda	19	94	99
Tanzania	20	97	92
Namibia	21	101	93
Uganda	22	102	103
Pakistan	23	105	109
Ghana	24	106	107
Nigeria	25	114	118
Cameroon	26	115	111
Bangladesh	27	116	116
Malawi	28	118	114
Mozambique	29	119	115
Zambia	30	124	120

Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub set to expand

The [Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub](#) is a Commonwealth initiative designed to help small and other vulnerable states access international finances for tackling the effects of climate change. The plan to scale the initiative from 10 to 39 developing small states and other vulnerable countries was supported by 70 participants of the Commonwealth Symposium on Climate Finance held in Malta recently. The event was jointly organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Government of Malta and the [Commonwealth Small States Centre of Excellence](#).

These projects will help small states reduce emissions and address the effects of climate change on people and ecosystems. The expansion of the hub means that the Commonwealth will be



able to also serve small states with its expertise to build capacity, bridge gaps in technical capabilities and unlock climate finance to access billions of dollars pledged for climate action.

Read more [here](#)

Commonwealth Africa innovation ecosystem strengthened



The Government of Seychelles and the National Institute of Science, Technology and Innovation (NISTI) partnered with the Commonwealth Secretariat to host the first ever Commonwealth Africa Innovation Ecosystem Workshop recently. The workshop, which took place in the Seychelles, focused on making Commonwealth countries in Africa more connected and innovative in order to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.

Government officials, academics, entrepreneurs and international organisations from across Africa met to share best practices and insights into peer-to-peer learning and capacity building, through a combination of presentations, case study analysis, data review, simulations, networking and debate.

The Commonwealth Secretariat facilitated the participation at this workshop of partner organisations such as United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

The workshop opened with Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland praising Seychelles as an “innovation trailblazer”. She said: “We believe in the critical importance of Commonwealth countries adopting a whole government approach to innovation, which is key to our future development, prosperity and security.”

New Commonwealth web-based resource to manage public debt goes live

A new state-of-the-art Commonwealth debt management system will help countries to proactively manage their public debt portfolio. Meridian, a new web-based resource designed to help countries effectively manage their public debt was launched at the Commonwealth Public Debt Management Forum.

The new software builds on the successes of the Commonwealth's ongoing debt management

work. This includes advocacy, policy advice, training and capacity building initiatives and the current Commonwealth Debt Recording and Management System (CS-DRMS) which has been helping over 100 agencies including Ministries of Finance, Treasuries and Central Banks in 60 countries to manage more than USD 2.5 trillion of public debt.

Read more [here](#)

Canada to invest \$2.7 million in Commonwealth Blue Charter Action Group

The Government of Canada announced in August that it will spend \$2.7 million over the next four years to further protect oceans through the Commonwealth Blue Charter Action Group on Ocean Observations. The Action Group plans to advance ocean observation through innovation

and development; and promote the sharing of information in order to make data, knowledge and best practices more accessible, including to small island developing states.

Read more [here](#)

Sierra Leone launches Africa's first blockchain-based national ID system

Sierra Leone has become the first African country to launch a blockchain-based national digital identification platform. The platform allows citizens without official identity documents to open bank accounts using their thumbprint, allowing for

increased financial inclusion of the estimated 80% of Sierra Leone's population that does not own a bank account.

Read more [here](#)

Commonwealth initiative to bridge digital identity gaps

The Commonwealth Digital Identity Initiative, launched in April 2018, aims to catalyse world-leading expertise to increase the adoption of digital identification systems across Commonwealth countries, with a particular focus on the inclusion of women and girls. It is estimated that over one billion people still have no form of identification, and as a result are unable to access critical services, such as cash transfers, education, banking and healthcare. The two-year programme, funded by the governments of Australia and United

Kingdom, brings together partners including the World Bank to generate new research insights, to deliver capacity building and technical assistance in Commonwealth countries and to engage in awareness-raising activities and advocacy events on narrowing the identification gap through inclusive, secure and trusted identification systems. The programme has reached its halfway point and significant progress has been achieved.

Read more [here](#)

Would you like to share your Commonwealth innovation story with 2.4 billion people in 53 Commonwealth countries?

Then please write to us with the details at innovation@commonwealth.int



Innovative Tonga coastal project wins global award



An innovative coastal protection project piloted in Tonga has won the 2019 Energy Global Award for making coastal communities more resilient to the effects of storms and storm surges. The Pacific

Community's Global Climate Change Alliance was chosen in recognition of its outstanding work and contribution towards advancing peer to peer learning in climate change adaptation among Pacific communities.

The project combines hard and soft engineering such as semi-permeable groynes, which allow sediment to move along the coast with beach re-nourishment. These coastal communities are now better protected from the effects of storms and storm surges and the wider population of Tonga and Palau are also benefitting from the three coastal recreation areas established by the project.

Read more [here](#)

Ten Commonwealth researchers awarded Blue Charter fellowships



The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) has announced the second cohort of the Commonwealth Blue Charter fellowship programme, which aims to advance the Commonwealth's shared commitment to preserve and nurture the ocean. Ten emerging scientists have been awarded fellowships at top Commonwealth universities to explore innovative ways to tackle plastic litter in the ocean. Each researcher will spend up to six months in an ACU member institution, as well as in industry, devising new ways to clean up marine litter, prevent plastics from getting into the sea, and developing alternatives to plastics.

Read more [here](#)

Interactive training programme for Commonwealth school teachers

The Commonwealth Education Trust (CET), a Commonwealth-accredited organisation that supports teachers to improve their teaching practice, has initiated its Teach2030 programme in a cluster of regional schools in Zambia, Uganda and Jamaica. CET's Teach2030 programme combines low cost online professional development with a programme of support enabling schools to run ongoing continuing professional development independently whilst being supported by a local organisation. Contextualised for teachers working in hard-to-reach communities, the self-paced courses combine theory, practical activities and the use of a

teaching portfolio. The courses strengthen teachers' foundational skills, such as effective questioning, active learning strategies and assessment.

More information on the Teach2030 programme can be found [here](#)

Pakistan releases stamp to mark the Commonwealth's 70th Anniversary

To mark the modern Commonwealth's 70th anniversary this year, the Government of Pakistan has released a commemorative postage stamp that has been designed by the Commonwealth Secretariat's design team. The stamp was released at the Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers' Meeting held in London in June.



New Commonwealth book enlightens young readers on deep sea mining



A new illustrated book, co-published by the Commonwealth, Deep Ocean Stewardship Initiative and the University of Southampton, seeks to educate children about seabed minerals and deep sea mining. *Treasures of the Deep* is a story

of three children who descend in a submarine to the depths of the ocean, where they learn about exotic ecosystems and rich mineral deposits on the sea floor.

Commonwealth Head of Oceans and Natural Resources Nicholas Hardman-Mountford said: "This publication helps to inform and engage communities in discussions about deep sea mining. It raises questions regarding the balance between exploitation and conservation and asks the reader to consider all elements." *Treasures of the Deep* is available in print and online. Copies can be made available for school libraries in the Commonwealth.

To download the book [click here](#)

University of the Commonwealth Caribbean opens innovation centre

The University of the Commonwealth Caribbean (UCC) has established an Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Technology Centre at its main campus in Jamaica to provide a space for students and innovators with entrepreneurial and

new technology-driven ideas to create practical solutions that can contribute to the country's and region's development.

Read more [here](#)



The Commonwealth

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