

Commonwealth Foundation Chair, Madam Simone de Comarmond

COMMONWEALTH PEOPLE'S FORUM OPENING CEREMONY
HYATT REGENCY HOTEL, PERTH
TUESDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2011

Remarks from the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Foundation at the Opening Ceremony of the Commonwealth People's Forum
Perth 25 October 2011.

- Representatives of the traditional owners of the lands on which we meet
- Honourable Julia Gillard, Prime Minister of Australia
- His Excellency Kamallesh Sharma, Secretary General of the Commonwealth Secretariat
- Honourable Colin Barnett, Premier of Western Australia
- Sue Ash, Chairperson of the Commonwealth People's Forum Steering Committee
- Distinguished representatives of Commonwealth Governments, Intergovernmental organizations, states, parliamentarians, civil society, invited guests and friends.

On behalf of the Commonwealth Foundation, it is my pleasure to welcome you to this opening ceremony of the Commonwealth People's Forum.

The Commonwealth Foundation has again been entrusted with the task of organising the CPF, but this would not have been possible without the collaboration and support of governmental and non-governmental partners. On behalf of the Foundation, I would like to thank the Australian Government, the Government of Western Australia, the Western Australia Council for Social Service and our Civil Society Advisory Committee for their commitment to making citizens' voices heard.

The programme is quite an extensive one and speaks to many of the issues of direct concern to the 2 billion Commonwealth citizens. I am particularly pleased to see emphasis on gender equality. The development of women leadership in our respective countries is an investment that will withstand all financial or economic dissonance and pay dividend under any circumstance. This is a compelling venture and should be taken seriously and acted upon yesterday rather than wait for tomorrow. If we believe in a better tomorrow, the only way to go is giving all our citizens the rights that they truly deserve.

May I take this opportunity to thank the CPF Steering Committee, which was so ably chaired by Sue Ash, who has been an incredible Commonwealth ambassador for Western Australia, for a job well done.

May I express our appreciation for the financial support provided by: Lottery West, Rio Tinto, the Western Australian Government and the Government of Australia. Our thanks are also extended to all our other supporters, whose logos are on display.

I look forward to joining you in the discussions that follow in the coming days and sincerely hope that we can bring the voices of all our people to this important gathering.

Thank you (367 words)