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### **Royal Commonwealth Society statement on UK voting to leave the European Union**

PRESS RELEASE: After a long campaign the people of the United Kingdom have voted to leave the European Union through a historic referendum. As the UK reacts to the implications of this decision, the positive consequences of the UK's membership of the Commonwealth should also be considered.

While several Commonwealth leaders had expressed concerns over a UK withdrawal from the EU, all respected the right of the people of the United Kingdom to decide their fate for themselves. The Prime Minister of Malta, Dr Joseph Muscat, told Maltese broadcaster TVM, that the country was ready for a new reality without the UK in the EU, saying "It's not what we had hoped would happen, but it has happened.". The President of Cyprus, Nicos Anastasiades, reiterated "special relations with Britain through the Commonwealth".

The decision to leave will have ramifications for all aspects of UK policy and politics. While the country comes together to chart a course forward there is a need to take stock of the global implications. The impact of the UK's membership of the Commonwealth network must be part of this conversation. The potential influence of the Commonwealth members' foreign policy, business ties, security links and cultural connections on the UK in its new position are significant. Existing Commonwealth ties also stretch across national, devolved and local politics in the UK as well as extensive diaspora networks.

The modern Commonwealth of Nations comprises 53 countries from all regions of the world including Cyprus and Malta who are also in the European Union. The Commonwealth network is used by governments, businesses and citizens to cooperate and use common ties between diverse nations. In its re-positioning strategy the UK should draw support from its Commonwealth membership and ensure that the Commonwealth potential in a fast-changing world should be integrated into all debates on the future of its foreign and domestic policy

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#### **Notes to Editors**

**The Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS)**, founded in 1868, is a network of individuals and organisations committed to improving the lives and prospects of Commonwealth citizens across the world. Through youth empowerment, education and advocacy, the RCS promotes the value and the values of the Commonwealth. [www.thercs.org](http://www.thercs.org)

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