



**Press Statement: Human Rights and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka, Wednesday 27 February 2013**

**Royal Commonwealth Society Chairman speaks at meeting at the House of Commons**

On Wednesday 27 February, Peter Kellner, Chairman of the Royal Commonwealth Society, spoke on the subject of human rights and the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka.

He noted that the Commonwealth and its nations are committed to “fundamental human rights” and the “liberty of the individual under the law”.

He noted that “many outside Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental bodies have voiced strong criticism in recent times of Sri Lanka’s human rights record” and went on to reflect on the potential impact on CHOGM 2013.

He stressed that the best possible outcome would be for CHOGM 2013 to proceed without qualification and noted that there is “still time left”. If Sri Lanka does not adequately address the criticisms, it would be “far better for the Commonwealth to abandon plans to meet in Colombo than to abandon its (human rights) principles.”

He said that if there is “to be an independent investigation of human rights abuses, it must embrace all such credible allegations. Both sides must be willing to cooperate both in establishing the truth and in yielding up those who should face trial”.

He continued “my hope is that the next few weeks will see decisive action to win [that battle] and to allow CHOGM to go ahead in Colombo in a way that demonstrates the very best of Commonwealth Values”.

ENDS

**Notes to Editors**

**The modern Commonwealth** was established with 8 members in 1949. In 2011, it has 54 members with a total population of 2.1 billion. It is a voluntary association of governments and peoples, built around shared language, institutions, challenges, aspirations and values. Commonwealth countries work together to promote common values: democracy, freedom, peace, the rule of law and opportunity for all.

**The Royal Commonwealth Society**

Founded in 1868, the RCS is the oldest and largest non-governmental organisation devoted to the modern Commonwealth. It conducts a range of events, activities and programmes aimed at promoting international understanding. HM Queen Elizabeth II is Patron and Peter Kellner is Chairman.

**The Harare Declaration** which sets out the fundamental principles of the Commonwealth  
<http://www.thecommonwealth.org/document/34293/35468/35773/harare.htm>

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