

elsewhere. But exchanging opposing views about global economics or neocolonialism or calling for east-west dialogue and world peace had little practical value. The Commonwealth was more a debating society than an organisation which sought to deliver. The Commonwealth is not the United Nations – and there is no point in seeking to emulate it by being a smaller, weaker and equally-divided organisation. As it does not need to embrace every single state in the world, the Commonwealth can avoid the lowest common denominator politics of the UN where the General Assembly becomes a talking-shop, organisational reform is blocked and the Security Council can only act when the USA, China, Russia, France and Britain all agree.

In recent decades, the Commonwealth has measured its success by the number of members it had, not the quality of the work it did for them. It sought to prove that it was not fading away by growing as big as possible. After the initial waves of decolonisation, it has continued to expand and Secretary-Generals have pointed to the queue at the door as a sign of vitality. But the Commonwealth needs to rethink its approach to membership. It needs to set higher standards for new members – and make clear to applicants like Yemen how they would need to improve their poor human rights records.<sup>1</sup> By ensuring that members sign up to high standards – and take concrete action to deliver them – the Commonwealth can truly add value for all of its members, and vouch for their commitment to democracy, good governance and growth to international organisations and the investment community. To be taken seriously, so that countries get real benefits from mem-