

fold further symbolises hopes of an African renaissance, and the Commonwealth's commitment to democratic values, while the absence of Pakistan reminds leaders of the fragility of democracy and how much remains to be done. The Durban jamboree also marks the modern Commonwealth's 50th anniversary. With 53 governments from countries ranging in size from India to Nauru, and surrounded by a People's Centre, NGO Forum and a multinational media circus, CHOGM '99 could not be more different from the 8-strong Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meetings discussing family matters over the fire in Whitehall. The Commonwealth wants to project how much it has changed, and will also elect a successor as Secretary-General to Chief Emeka Anyaoku to take the helm as the Commonwealth seeks to deliver on its goals of good governance, growth and global consensus in the new millennium. It wants to be a very modern Commonwealth.

Yet many still regard this as an oxymoron. The Commonwealth has had to spend fifty years denying that it is simply a post-imperial alumni club, deeply frustrated at always being asked "Is the Commonwealth still relevant?". It now has the opportunity to define a meaningful role for itself. But to do this, the Commonwealth will have to think, organise itself and act differently.

To make a difference, the Commonwealth should focus on the many things it agrees on – it shouldn't value its diversity for diversity's sake. In previous decades, it allowed north and south to talk in what was (sometimes) a less confrontational atmosphere than