coping with financial instability. Other countries may suffer less from fickle investors than from unfair neglect. African countries which have quietly done many things right, like Botswana, will still see growth stunted if investors believe that 'all African economies are basket-cases'. Thabo Mbeki used the example of the four cursory references to Africa in George Soros' best-selling book to show "the extent to which Africa is off the globalisation screen."[17] As the World Development Report puts it "Unfortunately even those African countries with a five-year record of good economic policies have found it difficult to attract this kind of investment [FDI], in spite of evidence showing that the overall returns in these economies may be just as good as elsewhere".[18]

So what can the Commonwealth do?

Given the many barriers to development and growth, talk of the Commonwealth as an engine of shared prosperity can seem hollow. But the Commonwealth could be one of the best tools that its member governments have.

It must be realistic about what it can achieve. Only its members can solve their problems for themselves – but the Commonwealth can help them to get it right. While the Commonwealth does have development cooperation funds and can spread know-how, it is not in the major league of donor organisations – nor should it aim to be. But, because many of the economic problems have political causes, the Commonwealth is uniquely well placed to add value by helping countries to develop the good governance which they need to grow. We