

states like Iraq, Cuba, Serbia and North Korea which seek to stand outside the world economy, nor those developed countries like France, Japan and the United States which are schizophrenic, and often have strong protectionist instincts when it suits them.

The Commonwealth believes in countries having ownership over their own development. It does not believe that successful development can be managed from outside. It wants the world's multilateral institutions and donor communities to work in genuine partnership to empower legitimate governments which accept their rights and responsibilities: their democratic mandate to govern their societies, and the need to do so in partnership with and in the interests of their own people.

The Commonwealth believes in the idea of an international community. Commonwealth countries have an enlightened view of self-interest and believe in international cooperation as a way to further it. The Commonwealth does not contain countries like the USA, China and Russia which seek to protect their interests by projecting power rather than pooling it multilaterally, nor those 'pariah states' whose regimes believe that self-destructive defiance is the best way to hang on to power.

This is the new Commonwealth consensus – it is what the organisation stands for today. Of course, Commonwealth members do not agree on everything – nor should they. And many countries need to make progress to make their commitments a reality. But their shared values give Commonwealth members a very solid foundation on which to build – the question is how to make it pay off for its members in practice.