

Press release: PM to pledge commitment to education and fighting malaria in wide-reaching Commonwealth speech

Theresa May will today pledge £212 million to make sure children living in developing Commonwealth countries receive 12 years of quality education. She will also call on leaders to commit to halving malaria by 2023.

In a wide-reaching speech ahead of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, the Prime Minister will tell those attending the summit that “we need to show the world what the Commonwealth is capable of”.

Alongside other high profile speakers, including Bill Gates, she will stress that global challenges require global solutions. And that maintaining the relevance and fulfilling the potential of this diverse, unique organisation, will begin at this summit.

Fulfilling this potential will ensure 2.4 billion Commonwealth citizens have safer, more prosperous and, crucially, fairer lives – which is key to the future of the organisation. Access to education and a life free from malaria will play an important role in this.

Drawing on her meetings with delegates at the Youth and Business Forums, where she heard their ambitions for a better future, Theresa May will announce substantial financial support for children, specifically girls, in developing countries across the Commonwealth to go to school.

The Prime Minister is expected to say:

Across the Commonwealth, tens of millions of young people – usually but not always girls – are denied the education that would allow them to get on in life.

All too often young people receive only the most basic education before being forced out of school through discrimination, poverty, or simply the expectations of society.

She will continue to say that:

International experts agree that young people need 12 years of quality education if they're to fulfil their potential.

I want this to be the summit where the Commonwealth agrees to make that the goal for all our members – and begins to put in place the concrete measures that will allow it to become a reality.

To help make this happen, I can announce that the UK will be committing £212 million of funding to support member states in delivering the 12 years commitment.

This foreign aid money will see nearly one million more girls in developing Commonwealth countries being able to go to school.

Alongside education, the Prime Minister will call on fellow Commonwealth leaders to join the UK in committing to halving malaria by 2023.

Since 2000, global malaria deaths have been cut by 60 per cent, due to hard work from governments, civil society groups, and individuals such as Bill Gates, who is also due to speak at the Joint Forum Plenary event.

The Prime Minister will thank Mr Gates and his wife Melinda for the tireless campaigning they have done in the fight against this disease. And on Wednesday, the UK will co-host a global malaria summit with Rwanda and Swaziland.

Around 90 per cent of Commonwealth citizens live in countries where malaria is still endemic. More than half of the 445,000 worldwide malaria deaths each year are in Commonwealth countries.

And while the effects of this disease can reduce a country's GDP by as much 1.3 per cent, the human cost, the PM will say is "incalculable."

Adding that:

We cannot in good conscience, talk about the young people of the world, about securing a legacy for our children and grandchildren, without tackling a disease that, worldwide, kills one of them every two minutes.

She will say:

The UK remains committed to its five-year pledge, made in 2016, to spend half a billion pounds a year tackling malaria.

This year, that figure includes £100 million that will be match-funded by partners in the private sector.

I know other Commonwealth nations are also among the biggest funders of this global effort.

Malaria devastates lives worldwide but it has a particular impact on the Commonwealth. And we, as a Commonwealth, have a particular duty to tackle it.