

Speech: PM speech at Commonwealth Games reception: 4 June 2018

I am delighted to welcome you all to Downing Street and to have this opportunity to celebrate your outstanding success at this year's Commonwealth Games.

In total over 880 athletes from across England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey took part.

And it is wonderful that so many of our medallists have been able to join us today.

For you made history on the Gold Coast.

Scotland and Wales each secured their biggest ever number of medals at an overseas Games...

...including Scotland's double-gold medallists Matt Rotherham and Neil Fachie...

.. and Wales' double-medal winning Olivia Breen.

There was Rhys McClenaghan winning Gold for Northern Ireland on the Pommel Horse.

And who can forget Team England's historic last gold in beating Australia in the netball.

As Australia head coach Lisa Alexander said – there has been a “seismic shift of power” in world netball – and I know we are all looking forward to the Netball World Cup that is taking place in Liverpool next year!

But with 229 medals in total I could go on listing all your achievements for a very long time, but first of all I just wanted to say to you not just congratulations, but a huge thank you.

Thank you, because although we all see the performances when it comes to the Commonwealth Games, you have all put in enormous hours of training to get to that place and of course along the way you have had to make sacrifices in order to be able to deliver that success.

Thank you also to your coaches – your families, to your friends – who have played a big part in supporting you.

And thank you for the entertainment, inspiration and excitement that you provided to millions of us who were staying up late or getting up early to watch what was happening and to see your success over there in the Gold Coast.

I have to say that it was a really exciting time, there was a real sense here

of the tremendous achievement of our athletes over in the Gold Coast.

But there was some other things that mattered as well as the haul of medals.

It was first Games of its kind where men and women competed for the same number of medals.

It was also the largest ever para-sports competition fully integrated within the main programme.

I think we should just be clear about what that means.

Not para-sports as a standalone Games with its own separate medal table.

But rather the biggest ever example of para-sport taking place in the same Games – with its results counted in the same medal table.

Another legacy was the part you played through sport in helping to strengthen relations between Commonwealth nations across the world.

And that's vitally important, because the Commonwealth isn't just defined by its common past – but also by the contribution it can make to our common future.

And we are a unique family of nations that span six continents and represent a third of the world's population.

So when we come together, we can help to tackle some of the world's great challenges – just as we did at the Commonwealth Summit in London that was immediately after the Commonwealth Games, with agreements ranging from strengthening cyber security and tackling plastics in our oceans to fighting malaria.

And last but not least, your success in these Games will have done something else – it will have inspired countless young people to take up sport themselves – with all the benefits that will bring, not just for the future of elite sport but for the health and well-being of people in every part of our country.

And I hope that we can build on all of these legacies when we host the next Commonwealth Games in Birmingham in 2022.

Delivering these Games will be an extraordinary feat.

Normally you have about seven years to prepare for hosting a major international sporting event.

Birmingham will be doing it in a little over four.

The handover ceremony itself is normally a year and a half in the making; but Birmingham has already done it in around twelve weeks.

But with our unparalleled experience and expertise – that stretches from the London Olympics and Paralympics to Glasgow 2014, the Rugby World Cup in 2015

and the World Athletics Championships last year – we have the capability to deliver.

And I think in Birmingham, we have the perfect host.

With more than 300,000 residents in West Midlands born in a non-UK Commonwealth country, we have a city and wider region that is fully representative of the Commonwealth family.

We are making a £70 million investment in Alexander Stadium – I was there towards the end of the games. Together with the upgrading of facilities across the city we will have an economic and sporting legacy for the region that will be felt for years to come.

And with all of your efforts – and those of others you have inspired, some of whom will by then have earned their own place at the top of world sport – I am sure that we will have yet another historic set of medals for all our teams.

So let's together build on everything you achieved in the Gold Coast this Spring.

Let's make Birmingham 2022 the greatest ever Commonwealth Games delivered in the fastest ever time.

And ensure that your fantastic achievements on the Gold Coast aren't just part of our history – but an inspiration for our future – for millions of people across our country, and for generations still to come.