

# Speech: Lord Ahmad Speech at the Commonwealth Youth Roundtable Event

Your Royal Highness, distinguished guests and young leaders of the Commonwealth, it is an immense pleasure for me as Minister of State for the government, to welcome you here to Lancaster House and continue the conversation many of us started in April last year on the vision of CHOGM 2018, and most importantly the focus of the youth forum.

I am particularly delighted that we are joined by His Royal Highness, The Duke of Sussex, who will speak in a moment about his work as Commonwealth Youth Ambassador.

Your Royal Highness, may I say how delighted we are that the Duchess of Sussex has become patron of the Association of Commonwealth Universities and I know she will be an energetic and inspiring champion in every sense. There is a small event happening very shortly in your lives, but I'm sure, as The Duchess of Sussex said herself during the Commonwealth Summit, she's very much looking forward to her role within the context of the Commonwealth family.

Your Royal Highness, over the last 10 months, the UK as Chair-in-Office, has been working very closely with member states, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth's many organisations and networks to ensure that we deliver, and act, on the outcomes and ambitions of the Summit and Heads of Government meeting.

We have already allocated over £500 million towards projects under the four themes of the summit, and we have already made good progress.

We are building, firstly, a more secure future through programmes to strengthen countries' cyber resilience. This is a particular priority for me personally as the government's cyber minister. We are building a prosperous future by improving employment prospects for young people through investment in training and skills development programmes. And importantly we are also investing in a fairer future through supporting the provision of 12 years of quality education for girls and boys, with a commitment from the United Kingdom of over £200m of UK funding.

However, there is also an important priority which I know is close to your heart, Sir, on the issue of a sustainable future. We, together with Vanuatu, are co-leading the Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance to tackle marine plastics, which now has 24 members of the Commonwealth, to many of whom we are giving technical and direct assistance. And we are also funding research to accelerate the development of new malaria treatments.

The 1.4 billion young people of the Commonwealth will define the future. Indeed, you are already defining the present, as those of us in this room will testify. All of you are advocating for issues that matter to everyone;

you are involved in delivering development programmes; you are creating businesses, you are creating wealth and employment; you are holding your governments to account, and most importantly your personal examples of the work you do is inspiring others across the globe.

Direct engagement between governments and young leaders is not just a nice thing to do, it is the right thing to do, it is essential. We must have our young leaders working hand-in-glove with all the member states, the Secretariat, and the Commonwealth's networks and organisations. Young people must not just be engaged, they must be directly involved and I assure you that as a minister responsible I pledge, together with our team here, to continue working directly with you, throughout our Chair-in-Office period and beyond, and that's what brings us together here today.

Before we kick off the discussions I would like to now invite His Royal Highness The Duke of Sussex to speak to us about his role as Commonwealth Youth Ambassador. Your Royal Highness, we are again honoured you've joined us today, and it's over to you.

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## **[News story: Health Secretary announces goal to end HIV transmissions by 2030](#)**

The Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock has set out a commitment to end transmission of HIV in England by 2030. He said this will happen through better prevention, detection, and treatment.

The announcement was made at the AIDSfree Cities Global Forum organised by the Elton John AIDS Foundation (EJAF), Evening Standard and The Independent.

The work to end transmissions will be supported by [£600,000 in funding from Public Health England's HIV Prevention Innovation Fund](#).

The funding will go to 13 innovative UK schemes to help reduce the risk of people getting HIV and reduce stigma.

An expert group will also be created to develop an action plan. Prevention will be at the heart of the plan, along with measurable action points for groups of people who are at risk of infection.

The UK has played a lead role in addressing HIV since the epidemic started, helping to stop AIDS-related deaths, preventing new HIV infections and investing in research and technology.

Innovative antiretroviral treatment has meant people diagnosed with HIV living in the UK can lead normal and long lives. With more people in Britain on lifesaving treatment than ever before, fewer people will become infected

as a result. New cases of HIV fell by 28% in the last 2 years.

HIV testing in sexual health services in England has increased by 15% from 2013 to 2017. HIV testing is an important part of ending the epidemic. It decreases the number of people living with HIV who are unaware of their infection and who may pass on the virus.

Reducing stigma of the disease is also a big part of the work as this can prevent people from getting tested.

Work to stop HIV is also focused outside of the UK. The government has invested £1.2 billion in the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, and UK Aid is expanding access to life-saving HIV treatment.

The Department for International Development has pledged to match public donations up to £2 million to the 'AIDSfree' appeal.

The support will improve access to HIV and AIDS care and treatment for those most in need in Nairobi in Kenya, and Maputo in Mozambique.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

HIV and AIDS are challenges that we must rise to. The injustice, the unfairness and the sadness they have brought and bring to this day must be tackled by us all.

My generation grew up knowing AIDS was a potential death sentence. That doesn't have to be the case anymore. Thanks to medical breakthroughs, public health campaigns, breaking down stigma and better education, AIDS is no longer a death sentence here. I feel proud that Britain has made such progress. But when I think about what's going on elsewhere, I feel anger that our progress is not yet reflected around the world.

We're all part of the global solution to this global challenge. What we do locally in London, in Delhi, in Nairobi, in Maputo, in Kiev, in Atlanta, in other cities, has an impact globally.

So today we're setting a new goal: eradicating HIV transmission in England by 2030. No new infections within the next decade. Becoming one of the first countries to reach the UN zero-infections target by 2030.

From the ultra-local to the truly global. That's the approach we must take to eliminate AIDS.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

While the world has made great strides in tackling HIV and AIDS, we need to step up our efforts. The battle is far from over,

especially in poorer countries where stigma, lack of awareness and a scarcity of lifesaving medicines remain.

AIDS is still the biggest killer of women of reproductive age around the world, and every week about 7,000 young women are infected with HIV. UK Aid Match means that every time the British public donate to the AIDSfree appeal, we match their donations pound for pound and their generosity goes twice as far.

This UK aid money is aimed at helping some of the most vulnerable young people living in Nairobi and Maputo. It will improve access to HIV and AIDS testing and treatment directly. It will change and – in many cases – save lives. We passionately believe we can create an AIDS-free future for the whole world. That's the scale of our ambition.

This campaign, backed by the generosity of the public, will help us to make this a reality.

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## Speech: Let's pledge to do our part to end HIV

It's great to be here today at this global forum with such a global audience. And somewhat of a relief.

When George called and asked me to be part of a project that's very close to Elton John's heart, I have to admit I feared the worst.

Luckily for us all, it wasn't a musical collaboration, but Sir Elton's other great passion. And it's a passion that I share and fully support.

I pay tribute to the work Sir Elton John has done over so many years, and to the Evening Standard for your leadership and campaigning and support.

HIV and AIDS are challenges that we must rise to together. The injustice, the unfairness, and the sadness they have brought and bring to this day must be tackled by us all.

They are global challenges that require global solutions and global co-operation. But I'm here because every global solution starts locally.

Just up the road from here, in Soho, is the building where perhaps the most important, and most successful, public health campaign in history was born.

In 1986, one of my great predecessors, the Health Secretary Norman Fowler, faced a controversial health challenge. A lot of people felt helpless and

there was a lot of tension.

Instead of flinching, he did the right thing and brought together medical experts and the finest minds in ad-land with one clear aim: to stop people dying of AIDS.

I was 7 years old. And I still remember the advert that came out of that meeting. I guess many of you do too.

There was a volcano erupting, a tombstone with the word 'AIDS' carved into it in huge letters and a very scary voiceover from John Hurt warning the audience: "don't die of ignorance".

And it worked. I, for one, was terrified. I didn't know what AIDS was – but, like everyone else, I found out.

That campaign saved lives. His decision showed that governments can make a difference.

It was imitated around the world. It stayed true to Fowler's principle of "fighting the disease, not the person". And it continues to inspire us about the power of public health interventions.

The Terence Higgins Trust found that countries who were slower to act still had twice as many HIV infections as the UK more than 2 decades later.

Thanks to that campaign, my generation grew up knowing AIDS was a potential death sentence.

That doesn't have to be the case anymore. Thanks to medical breakthroughs, public health campaigns, breaking down stigma and better education, AIDS is no longer a death sentence here.

I feel proud that Britain has made such progress. But when I think about what's going on elsewhere, I feel anger that our progress is not yet reflected around the world.

Just look at the statistics: 1.8m children are still living with HIV. Every week, 7,000 young women become infected with HIV.

In 2017, 940,000 people died of AIDS-related diseases. That's equivalent to all the people living in Manchester and Liverpool.

The fight against HIV is indistinguishable from the fight for equality and the fight against discrimination.

Let's not pull our punches: discrimination costs lives. Discrimination on gender or race or sexuality makes it harder for people to seek protection and help.

As Oscar Wilde said: "The road to freedom has been long and smeared with the blood of martyrs, and the fight's not over yet."

For a generation, the road to justice has been smeared with the blood of those who suffered the injustice of HIV. We have it within our grasp to end that discrimination and to end HIV, and we must not fail.

Britain demonstrated global leadership on AIDS with that ad campaign in the 1980s. And we are determined to do that again.

So today we're redoubling our commitment to act with a new global campaign.

I'm delighted this campaign is a joint effort between us in health and my brilliant colleague Penny Mordaunt in international development.

Because what the success of that campaign 30 years ago proves to me is that what we do in this city, in this country, can resonate around the world. It can make a difference.

What we do locally in London, in Delhi, in Nairobi, in Maputo, in Kiev, in Atlanta, in other cities, has an impact globally.

We're all part of the global solution to this global challenge, and none of us have all the answers or can do it alone. So I'm delighted to announce we're putting in money.

In a minute, Penny will explain what we're doing internationally, and the money we're putting in to help other nations.

But setting an example matters. So I'd like to, just for a moment, to share with you a new world-leading initiative here in the UK.

Today we're setting a new goal: eradicating HIV transmission in England by 2030. No new infections within the next decade, becoming one of the first countries to reach the UN zero-infections target by 2030.

This goal will be stretching it because it means preventing infections in higher-risk and harder to reach groups. But it is a realistic aim.

Part of our approach is our HIV Innovation Fund, which will support 13 local innovative initiatives to reduce the risk of people contracting or passing on HIV, reduce stigma and reach hard-to-reach communities.

Another part will be to review how we commission sexual health services, to make sure they are available to all.

And we're going to increase access to PrEP for people in high-risk categories. We're going to double the number of people who can receive the potentially life-saving HIV prevention drug.

The NHS is halfway through a 3-year clinical trial into PrEP, but we've decided to expand it early to include 26,000 people because the need has been far greater than anticipated.

From the ultra-local to the truly global, that's the approach we must take to eliminate AIDS.

Each nation may be at a different stage, face different challenges, possess different resources, but we share the same goal.

And let us just allow ourselves to dream that one day we can bear witness, within a generation, of going from 'don't die of ignorance' to an AIDS-free world.

That goal is now within our grasp. Let us work together to achieve it.

We will fight prejudice, we will fight wrong, we will fight evil, whether the evil of an indiscriminate virus or of an evil discriminatory heart.

We will champion the dignity of all human beings and the dignity of the human spirit. Let us pledge together: we will do our part and we will not fail.

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## **News story: Civil news: backdating powers in civil cases to be introduced**

Discretionary powers to backdate certain legal aid determinations are to be given to the Director of Legal Aid Casework from 20 February 2019.

These powers are being introduced under regulations laid by the government. They mean that legal aid will be available to cover urgent work carried out before the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) makes a determination.

When the regulations come into force we will close the 'out of hours' service. Where appropriate, providers will be able to apply to backdate a determination to cover any urgent work they have started e.g. at the weekend.

### **When can the power be used?**

The new power will allow the LAA to backdate an initial grant of licensed work or special case work. It also allows amendments to the scope of legal aid authorised under a certificate to be backdated. This includes where the determination is made following a review or appeal. It will only be possible to use the backdating power where certain conditions are met. These conditions are set out in the new regulation – see link below. We will provide more detail before the legislation comes into force.

### **When will these new powers be available?**

The new backdating power is due to come into force on 20 February 2019. It will be available for all applications for a determination that are made after that date. This includes applications for an amendment. The power will not be available for applications for a determination made before 20 February 2019 even where the LAA decision takes place after that date.

## **Will this affect my delegated functions?**

No, you will still have delegated functions to grant emergency representation in the same cases as at present. These can be used to cover urgent work where appropriate.

## **How do I ask for a backdated determination?**

We will provide further information in the next few weeks on the process providers should follow to request that a determination be backdated.

## **When will the 'out of hours' service close?**

We will close the 'out of hours' service when the new backdating power comes into force. The last day this service will operate will be 19 February 2019. Following this, providers will no longer be able to contact caseworkers to obtain a determination using this service.

## **Further information**

[The Civil Legal Aid \(Procedure\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2019 \(SI 2019/130\)](#) – the regulation making these changes

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## **[Press release: UK pledges continued support to Commonwealth's young people](#)**

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad, Minister of State for the Commonwealth and His Royal Highness The Duke of Sussex, the Commonwealth Youth Ambassador, met with 30 young people from across the Commonwealth in London today.

At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in April 2018, the UK announced more than £500 million in funding to help deliver the summit's commitments during its period as Chair-in-Office. This included a range of projects with a specific youth focus, recognising that 60% of the population of the Commonwealth is under 30.

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad, Minister of State for the Commonwealth, said:

We will only succeed in delivering the vision for the Commonwealth agreed in April 2018 if we listen to the views of young people; they must be at the heart of our collective effort.

On education, we are delivering projects worth over £200 million in nine Commonwealth countries to enable 12 years of quality education



for girls and boys. We are helping to create 150 new Queen Elizabeth's Commonwealth scholarships for talented students by 2025.

On trade and political inclusion, we are making concrete steps too. We recently supported the 2nd Annual Youth Business Forum in Uganda, bringing together over 300 youth entrepreneurs to influence the national youth legislative agenda, and in March we are planning an Africa regional conference on youth inclusion.

And on our environment's future, our co-leadership of the Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance with Vanuatu, and our Commonwealth Marine Economies programme, are helping to protect our oceans and the communities that rely on them.

I'm delighted that His Royal Highness was able to be here as Commonwealth Youth Ambassador, and to speak about his inspiring work to champion the youth of the Commonwealth.

At the event, the Minister and Duke of Sussex heard from Dr Elvis Eze, co-founder of the Commonwealth Youth Health Network and Youth Ambassador for Malaria No More. He also met with Tijani Christian, Chair of the Commonwealth Youth Council. Dr Elvis and Mr Christian shared their experience of advocating for the views and perspectives of young people across a range of issues.

## **Further information**