

Address
by Mr Y.K. Lule
Assistant Commonwealth Secretary-General

Mr Chairman, Honourable Prime Minister, Your Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my privilege as representative of the Commonwealth Secretary-General, and as the Co-Chairman of the Seminar, to extend to you a very cordial welcome on this occasion.

The Commonwealth Secretary-General has asked me to convey to you his greetings and best wishes for a truly successful meeting. The question of the role of youth in the development process has occupied the attention of the Secretariat for some time and arose from the instructions of the Heads of Government in 1969, in response to an initiative from the British Government that attention be given to the field of youth. The Secretary-General himself is personally interested in the challenges facing governments in this regard and in his name as well as in my own I welcome the participants to this important Seminar.

As most of those present will be aware, this Seminar is the third in a series of three regional meetings at which small groups of experienced participants have been invited to discuss problems of youth training and employment. Eighteen months ago a pioneering group met in Nairobi to discuss the situation in Commonwealth Africa and nine months later the second meeting in Trinidad considered the position in the Caribbean countries. In the period between these two regional meetings a full Commonwealth Conference on Education in Rural Areas was held in Ghana and this included an overview of many of the related problems. Now we come to the last regional seminar in the series prior to a gathering of officials and a Commonwealth Meeting of Ministers responsible for youth matters, to take place at about this time next year.

Links between the three seminars have been ensured. Participants have been invited from other regions in order to give perspective to the discussions and share what is relevant in their experience. We are particularly fortunate to be able to welcome here today a representative from the Commonwealth Caribbean, Mr Tyndall of the Commonwealth Caribbean Regional Secretariat, and a representative from Commonwealth Africa, Mr Kaphwiti Banda, Assistant Commander of the Malawi Young Pioneers and a

veteran of our first regional seminar in Nairobi.

We are pleased, too, at the enthusiastic response of the international agencies to take part in this meeting. Our Commonwealth countries are also members of several international and regional groupings. Our aim as a Commonwealth Secretariat is not to supplant or to duplicate such organisations but rather to work with and through them for the general betterment of our member countries. We therefore extend to their observers a sincere welcome and an invitation to play a full part in our work over the next week.

We are also fortunate in having lead speakers of such quality and experience as Dr Premadasa Udagama, Permanent Secretary and Director-General of Education in Ceylon, Dr Fred Milson of Westhill College, Birmingham, a recognised authority on youth matters, and Mr Abdullah Malim Baginda, Assistant Director (Youth Affairs) of the Malaysian Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. In addition we have Mr Klaus Bettenhausen of the International Labour Organisation who at short notice accepted our invitation to deal with some approaches to the employment problem in Asia.

We in the Secretariat try not to impose unduly on the generosity of those countries which invite us to hold meetings in their territory. As usual, only a certain amount can be done by remote control and, despite our best endeavours, we must rely extensively on local support. This has been given unstintingly and I believe that all is set fair for a successful meeting.

I should also like to place on record our warm appreciation for the assistance which we have received from the Commonwealth Foundation in holding these regional meetings. Without their generous help, it would not have been possible for many of the delegates from the developing countries to be with us and we record with gratitude the Foundation's contributions to this meeting.

Mr Chairman, I do not propose at this stage to deal with the complex problems with which the seminar will be concerned. My colleague Dr Maraj has already given us much food for thought and the professional issues he has identified will undoubtedly provoke discussions of a high quality. I would like to confine my observations to two points. The first is that resolutions and conclusions are relatively easy to formulate. Implementing them is a problem of another dimension. This demands confidence and resolution on the part of governments and the maximum possible co-ordination of all bodies, official and non-official. The problem

is not divided neatly into subsections of education, training, welfare, culture, economic and industrial development, agriculture, rural development, labour, national service and so on. Let us remember that what we are here to discuss are problems of the lives and futures of young people and their countries, cross-disciplinary problems covering all the aspects which I have mentioned and others besides. Co-operation and co-ordination are essential for efficiency and success. How to achieve this joint effort we hope to learn at this meeting.

The second point I wish to stress, Mr Chairman, is that participants do not speak as official delegates of their governments but as experienced individuals actively engaged in grappling with the problems which we are here to discuss. Thus they are able to promote a frank and free exchange of information and experience without feeling constrained by the niceties of protocol which must be observed by official spokesmen. In such circumstances, we expect to emerge with a consensus of opinion on principles and strategy, together with a wide range of tactical approaches and varied programmes for their implementation.

In conclusion, may I, on behalf of the Commonwealth Secretary-General, express our gratitude to the Government of Malaysia for its spontaneous invitation to hold the seminar in the excellent facilities located so pleasantly in this beautiful city. The ready acceptance by the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, Dato Hamzah bin Haji Abu Samah, of the chairmanship of the Seminar indicates the importance with which this meeting is regarded here and we are grateful to him.

Finally, may I say that we recognise fully the honour bestowed by the presence here this morning of the Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak, and assure him that we shall do our utmost to justify the implied expression of confidence in the value and success of our gathering. We are conscious of our responsibility and shall endeavour to conduct our discussions to a final report of positive and practical value towards the solution of the massive and urgent problems with which they will be concerned.