



WINDSOR CASTLE

Over the coming week, as we celebrate the friendship, spirit of unity and achievements of the Commonwealth, we have an opportunity to reflect on a time like no other.

Whilst experiences of the last year have been different across the Commonwealth, stirring examples of courage, commitment and selfless dedication to duty have been demonstrated in every Commonwealth nation and territory, notably by those working on the frontline who have been delivering healthcare and other public services in their communities. We have also taken encouragement from remarkable advances in developing new vaccines and treatments.

The testing times experienced by so many have led to a deeper appreciation of the mutual support and spiritual sustenance we enjoy by being connected to others.

The need to maintain greater physical distance, or to live and work largely in isolation, has, for many people across the Commonwealth, been an unusual experience. In our everyday lives, we have had to become more accustomed to connecting and communicating via innovative technology - which has been new to some of us - with conversations and communal gatherings, including Commonwealth meetings, conducted online, enabling people to stay in touch with friends, family, colleagues and counterparts, who they have not been able to meet in person. Increasingly, we have found ourselves able to enjoy such communication, as it offers an immediacy that transcends boundaries or division, helping any sense of distance to disappear.

We have all continued to appreciate the support, breadth of experiences and knowledge that working together brings, and I hope we shall maintain this renewed sense of closeness and community. Looking forward, relationships with others across the Commonwealth will remain important, as we strive to deliver a common future that is sustainable and more secure, so that the nations and neighbourhoods in which we live, wherever they are located, become healthier and happier places for us all.