



**14<sup>th</sup> March 2017 Tonga marks Commonwealth day in a choral event under the theme “A Peace-building Commonwealth,” in presence was His Serene Highness Prince Tungi, at Queen Salote College Hall yesterday evening.**

In the keynote address Tonga’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for MEIDECC and Foreign Affairs Hon. Siaso Sovaleni said Commonwealth is comprised of 52 states from all major continents demonstrating rich cultural diversity.

“Commonwealth is comprised of 52 states from all major continent, demonstrating rich cultural diversity, and at time of increasing instability and uncertainty in the world, we remain grateful that the Commonwealth family of nations maintains its role as a vital source of strength and hope for all its members,” he said.

Sovaleni added that the Commonwealth promotes mutual understanding and respect for difference culture while rejecting intolerance, prejudice and racism and over the years have worked to raise awareness about Small Island Developing States such as Tonga.

“Over the years, the Commonwealth has worked arduously to increase the awareness of the vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and remains at the head of policy research and advocacy to assist small states, such as Tonga, to build resilience, access financing, alleviate debt burdens and devise strategies to respond to natural disasters and the impacts of climate change.”

Hon Sovaleni invited all Tongans to support the initiative in promoting a peace – building

society.

“In commemorating this auspicious occasions, I am happy to invite all Tongans to support the initiative in promoting a peace – building society, as we work towards eradicating social and economic inequality, and promoting all to maximize their fullest potential.”

New Zealand High Commissioner to Tonga H.E Mrs. Sarah Walsh stated that the theme was an opportunity for Commonwealth nations to celebrate partnership.

“A peace – building Commonwealth, which promotes international peace & security, sustainable economic growth & development, and rule of law as essential for the progress and prosperity for all people,” she said.

A message from the Head of Commonwealth by Her Majesty the Queen, Queen Elizabeth II was also read by the Deputy Prime Minister at the occasion.

Commonwealth Day is commemorated annually on March, 13<sup>th</sup>.

Present at the event were, Minister for Education and Training Hon. Penisimani Fifita, Australian High Commissioner to Tonga, H.E Mr. Andrew Ford, Acting Attorney General Mr. ‘Aminiasi Kefu, Secretary for Foreign Affairs Mr. Va’inga Tone and students of Queen Salote College.



ENDS

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