

ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY STATEMENT ON COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING 2018

By David Haisell

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EDMONTON, AB — The 25th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) was held from April 18-20, 2018. Preceding CHOGM were several days of public forums, among them the Commonwealth Youth Forum (CYF) and the Commonwealth People's Forum (CPF).

The environment was a significant topic at this year's CHOGM, with Prime Minister Theresa May of the United Kingdom supporting a significant reduction in the production of single-use plastics in order to curb plastic contamination of the world's oceans. Similarly, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada pledged his country's support of the Commonwealth Blue Charter, described as "a Commonwealth commitment to work together to protect and manage our ocean".

Commonwealth leaders at CHOGM also agreed to endorse Prince Charles as successor to the role of Head of the Commonwealth, currently held by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Prince Charles' candidacy had been called into question in recent months amid suggestions that the position should rotate among member nations.

The status of women and vulnerable peoples was a theme underlying this year's CHOGM. Marie-Claude Bibeau, Canada's Minister of International Development, also participated in a discussion panel on accountability for violence against women, particularly victims of the ongoing crisis in Rohingya. Although not on the official agenda, the status of LGBTQI rights was raised by many activists, prompting a statement of regret from Prime Minister May. Out of 53 Commonwealth countries, 36 currently have laws criminalizing homosexuality, a legacy of colonial-era sodomy laws.

Brexit had a lingering effect on this year's proceedings, with an increased interest in inter-Commonwealth trade as a possible substitute for current trade with the European Union. The prime ministers of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom also met exclusively for a debate about cybersecurity, which some observers regarded as a sign of a growing emphasis on a "CANZUK" bloc.

About RCS Canada

The Royal Commonwealth Society of Canada (RCS) is both a learned Society and club, non-partisan, independent of governments and supported solely by public generosity. The RCS engages with its youth, civil society, business and government networks to address issues that matter to the Citizens of the Commonwealth. Its primary focus is to the promotion of young people throughout the Commonwealth.

For more information, please visit www.rcs.ca.

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