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Concept Paper for Commonwealth Conference, April 2018

We are witnessing a period of tumultuous change across the globe. Driven by factors such as the far-reaching impacts of climate change, political and economic upheavals of Brexit, US withdrawal from international leadership coupled with the rise of Chinese transnational organizations, persistent international terrorism, and widening political and social polarisation, this wave of change is restructuring how the world works.

What is the role of the Commonwealth of Nations in these changing times? This conference will explore the normative and practical leadership roles of faith communities, universities, and the Commonwealth of Nations itself under the theme: **“Sustainable Peace and Development in a Polarising World: Perspectives and Contributions from the Commonwealth of Nations.”**

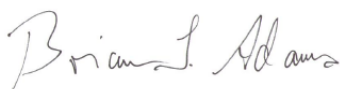
Based on the successful precedents of events organized in conjunction with the G20 and G8 Summits, it is clear that input from a broad range of voices strengthen international decision making. This conference will assemble experts from around the Commonwealth as part of the activities surrounding the Commonwealth Games on the Australian Gold Coast in April 2018.

Conference Title and Subthemes

The overarching theme for the inaugural Commonwealth Conference is: “Sustainable Peace and Development in a Polarising World.” In order to draw on the diverse backgrounds and interests of our various constituencies, the conference will be over three days. Specifically, we will begin on the first day with an opening inaugural session on the evening participants arrive, followed by two days dedicated to discussions and dialogue with internationally recognised leaders from business, politics, media, education, religious communities and civil society. Conference presentations and working group sessions will focus on the following themes:

- **Role of Commonwealth of Nations Today**
- **Academic Freedom and Extremism: How to support free thinking while combatting extremists**
- **Interfaith/Intercultural Dialogue and Economic Development**
- **Sports and Interreligious Understanding**
- **Conflict Resolution**
- **UN Sustainable Development Goals**
- **Religious Strategies for Countering Youth Radicalization**
- **Regional Working Group Sessions** (emerging from the ongoing planning process)

In each of the foregoing areas, experts from a wide range of religious, national, political, commercial and academic backgrounds will be brought together to raise the level of discourse on the relevant issues and to develop practical recommendations. The aim will be to explore ways that these institutions can assume responsibility and contribute distinctive ideas and solutions that can interact with and reinforce the efforts of public and civil society institutions.



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