As I Take Up My Position As President

After-dinner remarks at COL Board of Governors
Farewell Dinner for Sir John Daniel
Vancouver, Canada

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Commonwealth of Learning

Thank you for coming and I hope you’re enjoying the evening.

As I start my new job as President & CEO of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) let me, in all humility, acknowledge with warm appreciation, the support and encouragement that COL has received from you and all our stakeholders here in Vancouver and in the field. I believe that all Commonwealth citizens should have the opportunities for access to quality education and training and I assure you that I shall dedicate myself with renewed energy to ensure that COL continues to be regarded as a highly professional organisation that upholds Commonwealth values and delivers on development results. In doing so, I shall try my best to fill the void that Sir John Daniel’s departure has created and build on the invaluable legacy that he leaves us with.

COL is a small but important organisation. Its aim is to help governments and institutions to expand the scale, efficiency and quality of learning by using open, distance and technology-enhanced approaches. COL’s richest resource is a small team of dedicated professionals who have the capacity to develop models and promote innovative uses of technology. Today COL is a respected and credible organisation—this is because COL delivers results, is flexible and responsive to the needs of its diverse stakeholders and demonstrates prudence while ensuring value for money.

We have reached this stage over an existence of two decades where many who have gone before us have made valuable contributions. COL has been very fortunate to have visionary leaders from the very beginning—Prof James Maraj, our first President, who established COL and gave it a sense of identity, followed by Tan Sri Raj Dhanarajan, who made it a much more academic and flat organisation. Sir John’s ambitious slogan ‘learning for development’ has brought COL into the mainstream of development and given us an agenda and a purpose that will continue to guide our work over the next triennium. Let me acknowledge with gratitude all our Presidents, the former colleagues in the room and those who are with us in spirit.
As we know, several Commonwealth countries are not likely to achieve the MDGs or EFA goals by 2015. Even beyond that deadline, poverty will continue to dominate development discourse, along with issues of population and climate change. COL will support countries by focusing on girl’s education, skills development and the use of OER. While it is important to support the countries off track to achieve the MDG’s, it is also critical to position COL for the post-MDG world. COL will contribute by promoting the use of technologies for both formal and non-formal education and training for human resource development.

The theme for the Commonwealth last year was ‘Women as Agents of Change: Invest in Women and Transform the world’. No Commonwealth intergovernmental organisation has so far been headed by a woman—once again COL has led the way and I salute our Board of Governors for their vision and foresight in giving me this opportunity to continue to serve COL in a new capacity as the President and Chief Executive Officer. This is an extraordinary honour and I am very grateful to you for the confidence and trust that you have placed in me. Thank you for your continued support.